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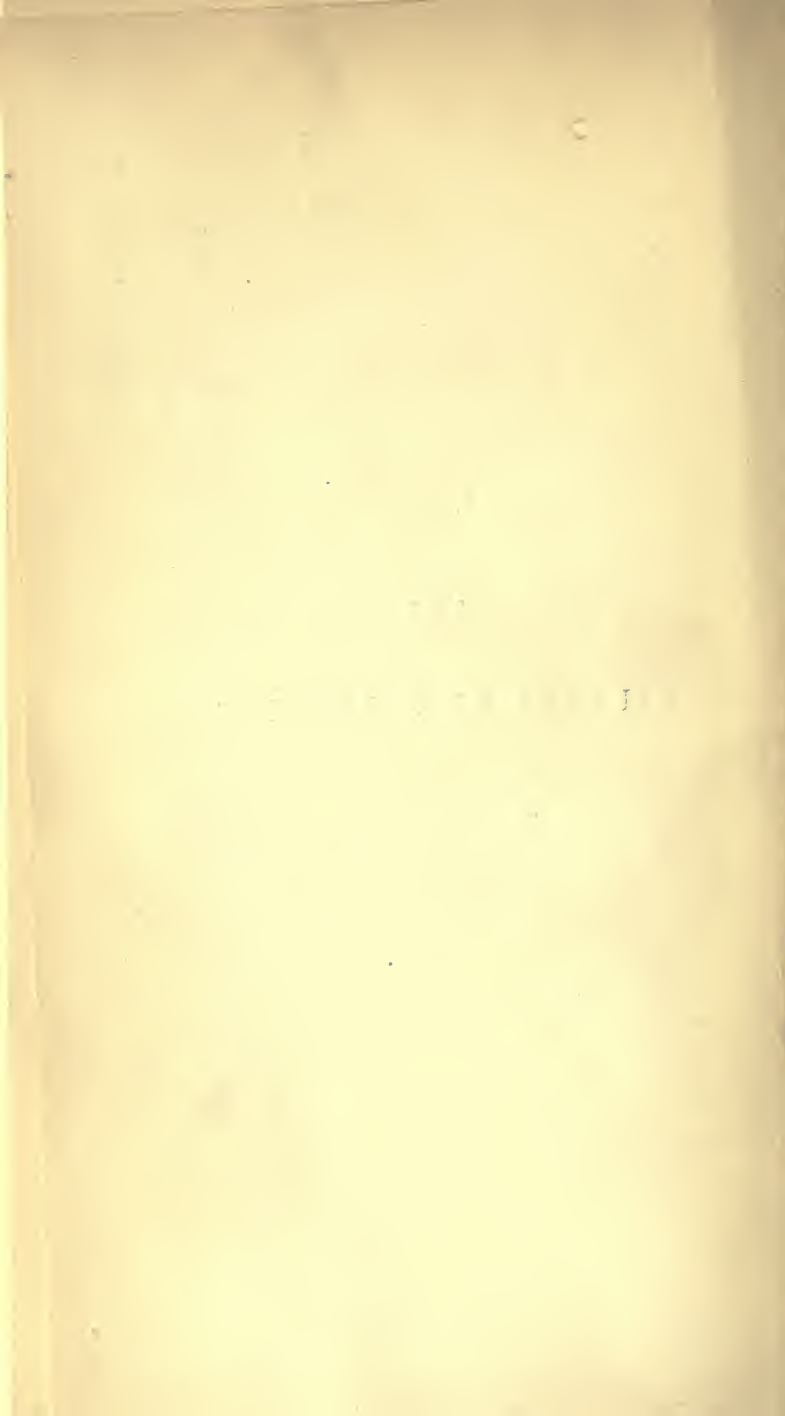
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THE
STUDENT OF SALAMANCA.



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THE
S T U D E N T

OF

S A L A M A N C A

[by Frederick Hardman]

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TO

COLONEL IGNACIO GURREA,

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED, AS A SLIGHT TESTIMONY OF
SINCERE REGARD, BY HIS FRIEND

THE AUTHOR.

THE STUDENT OF SALAMANCA.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

“ España de la guerra
Tremola la pendon.”

Cancion Patriotica.

It wanted but an hour of sunset on the last day of September, 1833, when two young men, whose respective ages did not much exceed twenty years, emerged from a country lane upon the high-road from Tarazona to Tudela, in the small district of Navarre south of the river Ebro.

The equipments of the travellers — for such the dusty state of their apparel, and the knapsacks upon their shoulders, indicated them to be — were exactly similar, and well calculated for a pedestrian journey across the steep sierras and neglected roads of Spain. They consisted, with little variation, of the national Spanish dress — short jackets of dark cloth, somewhat braided and embroidered, knee-breeches of the same material, and broad-brimmed hats, surrounded by velvet bands. Only, instead of the tight-fitting stockings and neat pumps, which should have completed the costume, long leathern gamashes extended from knee to ankle, and were met below the latter by stout high-quartered shoes. Each of the young men carried a stick in his hand, rather

as it appeared, from habit, or for purposes of defence, than as a support, and each of them had a cloak of coarse black serge folded and strapped upon his otter-skin knapsack. With their costume, however, the similarity in their appearance ceased; nothing could be more widely different than their style of person and countenance. The taller of the two, who was also apparently the elder, was of a slender, active figure, with well-moulded limbs, and a handsome, intelligent countenance, in which energy and decision of character were strongly marked. His complexion was dark olive; his eyes and short curling hair were of a coal black; what little beard he had was closely shaven, excepting upon the upper lip, which was fringed by a well-defined mustache, as gracefully curved and delicately penciled as any that Vandyke ever painted. At this time, however, there was a shade over his countenance other than that cast by the broad leaf of his sombrero; it was the look of mingled hope, anxiety, and suspense, sometimes worn by persons who are drawing near to a goal, their attainment of which is still doubtful, and at which, even when attained, it is not quite certain whether pleasure or pain awaits them.

No such thoughts or anxieties were to be read upon the joyous, careless countenance of the second traveller—a stout, square-built young man, whose ruddy complexion and light-brown hair contrasted as strongly with the dark locks and olive skin of his companion as they differed from the generally received notions of Spanish physiognomy. The face wore no particular expression, excepting that of good-humoured *insouciance*; the hazel eye had a merry twinkle, and a slight fulness of lip and chin seemed to denote a reasonable degree of addiction to the good things of this life. Altogether, and to judge them by their physiognomies only, one would have chosen the first for a friend, the latter for a pleasant and jovial boon companion.

On leaving the cross-road, the two pedestrians took a northerly direction, in which they proceeded for a quarter of an hour without exchanging a syllable, the one absorbed in meditations which the other was apparently unwilling to disturb. At the end of that time they paused, as if by preconcerted arrangement, in front of a small *venta*, or country inn, less remarkable for the accommodation it afforded, than for its pleasant situation and aspect. It stood a little back from the road, in a nook formed by the recession of a line of wooded hills which there skirt the highway. The front of the house, composed of rough blocks of gray stone, was overgrown by the twisted branches of a venerable vine, whose age did not prevent it from becoming covered each spring with leaves and tendrils, or from yielding in the autumn an abundant supply of delicious gold-coloured grapes. At a short distance in front of the door, which opened into the stable, whence a wooden step-ladder led to the upper floor, there stood a huge oak, throwing its broad shadow over the table and benches placed beneath it for the accommodation of guests. On one side of the *venta*, and detached from it, but in a right line with its front, was a massive fragment of wall, which had probably, at no very remote period, formed part of a chapel or convent. Its broken and irregular summit rose full thirty feet from the ground throughout more than double that length, and along the wall, at about two-thirds of a man's height, ran a horizontal black line, indicating, as did the numerous marks and bruises upon the whitewashed surface, that this ancient piece of masonry enabled the frequenters of the *venta* to indulge in the favourite *juego de pelota*, or ball-play, to which the Navarrese and the northern Spaniards generally are much addicted, and in which most of them excel.

On the arrival of our travellers, the benches in front of

the venta had already two occupants, belonging to classes of men which may rank amongst the chief supporters of Spanish roadside inns. One of them was a corporal of dragoons, returning to his garrison at Tudela, whence he had probably been sent with a despatch, or on some similar mission. He was a strapping, powerful fellow, well set up, as the phrase goes, and whose broad shoulders and soldierly figure showed to advantage in his dark-green uniform. His horse—a high-crested, fine-legged Andalusian, whose jetty coat looked yet blacker by contrast with the white sheep-skin, covering the saddle, and with the flakes of foam where-with his impatient champings had speckled his broad chest—was tied up near the stable door, the bridle removed, finishing out of a nose-bag a plentiful feed of maize. The dragoon's sabre and his brass and leopard-skin helmet were hanging at the saddle-bow, their owner having temporarily covered his head with a smart foraging-cap of green and scarlet cloth, which set off to great advantage his bearded and martial countenance. Having provided for his horse, the trooper was now attending to the calls of his own appetite, and doing immense execution on some goat's-milk cheese and excellent white bread, which he moistened by copious draughts of the thick black wine of Navarre.

Seated opposite to the soldier, and similarly employed, was a hardy-looking man, who had arrived in company with two mules, which were also tethered to a ring in the venta wall, but at a respectful distance from the dragoon's charger. Before them lay a heap of chopped straw and Indian corn leaves, at which they assiduously munched—not, however, without casting many a wistful glance at the more luxurious repast of their neighbour. The soldier and the muleteer were apparently old acquaintances; and when the new-comers approached them, they were discussing with

great animation the merits of the various players in a recent ball-match near Tudela. Thence they glided into a discussion concerning ball-players in general; the muleteer, a Navarrese, asserting the invincibility of his country at the game of pelota, whilst the corporal, who was from the neighbourhood of Oviedo, was equally confident of the superiority of the Asturians.

Whilst the younger of the travellers ascertained from the *patrona* the state of the larder, which, as is usual enough in Spanish inns, was but meagrely provided, his companion sought the landlord of the venta. He found him in the chimney-corner, enjoying a supplementary siesta amidst a cloud of wood smoke.

"The Conde de Villabuena," inquired the young man, shaking the drowsy host out of his slumbers — "is he still at his house between this and Tudela?"

The *ventero*, a greasy, ill-conditioned Valencian, rubbed his eyes; muttered a coarse oath, and seemed half disposed, instead of replying, to pick a quarrel with his interrogator; but a glance at the athletic figure and resolute countenance of the latter, dissipated the inclination, and he growled a surly affirmative.

"And his daughter also?" continued the stranger in a lower tone.

"Doña Rita? To be sure she is, or was yesterday: I saw her ride by with her father and some other cavaliers. What eyes the little beauty has! and what a foot! It peeped from under her habit as she passed. Sant' Antonio, what a foot!"

And the *ventero*, now thoroughly awakened, launched out into a panegyric on the lady's beauty, interlarded by appeals to various saints as to the justice of his praise, which was continued, in the manner of a soliloquy, for some time after the stranger had left the room.

At the venta door the young man encountered his companion, issuing forth with a jug of wine in his hand.

"Well, Luis," said the latter, "have you ascertained? Is she still here, or has our journey been in vain?"

"She is here," was the reply.

"Good. Then put aside your melancholy, and try to eat and drink better than you've lately done. We have plenty of time; it will not be dark for the next two hours. So to supper, such as it is; ham rancid as an old oil-cask, eggs that would have been chickens to-morrow, and wine—but the wine may atone for the rest—it is old Peralta, or the patrona is perjured. I have had the table spread under the tree, that fresh air may sweeten musty viands, and to see the ball-play of yonder soldier and muleteer."

The youth addressed by the name of Luis, glanced in the direction of the ball-court, where the two men referred to by his companion were preparing for a match. The discussion as to the superiority of Navarrese or Asturian ball-players had increased in warmth, until the disputants, each obstinate in his opinion, finding themselves at a loss for verbal arguments, had agreed to refer the matter to a trial of individual skill. The challenge came from the dragoon, who, on hearing it accepted, proceeded to lighten himself for his task. With great alacrity he threw aside his foraging-cap, stripped off his pouch-belt and uniform coat, and unfastened his spurs. The preparations of the muleteer were even more rapidly completed. When he had thrown off his jacket—the back of which was adorned, according to the custom of his class, with flowers and various quaint devices, cut out in cloth of many colours, and sewn upon the brown material of the garment—he stood in his shirt and trousers of unbleached linen, with light sandals of plaited hemp upon his feet. In the latter

respect he had the advantage of the soldier, who, not choosing to play barefooted, was obliged to retain his heavy boots. In apparent activity, too, the advantage was greatly on the side of the Navarrese, who was spare and sinewy, without an ounce of superfluous flesh, but with muscles like iron, and limbs elastic and springy as whalebone. His very face partook of the hard, wiry character of his person; the cheekbones were slightly prominent, and, although he wanted some years of thirty, two deep furrows or lines, such as are rarely seen on the countenance of so young a man, curved outwards from either nostril to considerably below the mouth, increasing in depth when he talked or smiled, and giving, in conjunction with a quick gray eye, considerable character to his frank, and by no means disagreeable countenance.

The game began with great spirit, and with much appearance of equality between the players, who would both have been deemed first-rate in any ball-court in Europe. The formidable strength of the dragoon seemed at first to give him the advantage; the tremendous blows he delivered sent the ball against the wall with as much seeming force as if it had been driven from a cannon, and made it rebound to an immense distance, keeping the muleteer continually at the very top of his speed. The match was to be the best two out of three games. The first of the three was won by the muleteer, after the victory had been long and well contested.

“*Bien!*” said the dragoon, as he wiped the perspiration from his face, and took a deep draught out of a jug of wine presented to him by the ventero. “*Bien* — that is one for you; the next may go differently. I missed the ball through my foot slipping. Curse boots for playing ball in, say I! *Hola, Valenciano!* have you never a pair of shoes or espadrillas to lend me?”

The landlord, who acted as umpire, and who, as well as

his wife and two or three loitering peasants, took an intense interest in the game, ran into the house and fetched a pair of sandals. These the soldier tied upon his feet, in lieu of the boots to which he attributed his defeat. Then, with renewed confidence, he took his place opposite the wall, where the muleteer awaited him.

But if, as the dragoon asserted, an accident had lost him the first game, it was soon evident that the superior activity and endurance of his antagonist were equally certain to lose him the second. The idleness of a garrison life, fat feeding, and soft lying, had disqualified the soldier to compete with a man like the Navarrese, accustomed to the severest hardships, whose most luxurious meal was a handful of boiled beans, his softest couch a bundle of straw or the pack-saddles of his mules. Constant exposure and unceasing toil had given the muleteer the same insensibility to fatigue attributed to certain savage tribes. Whilst his antagonist, with inflamed features and short-drawn breath, and reeking with perspiration, toiled after the ball, he went through the same, or a greater amount of exertion, without the least appearance of distress. Not a bead of moisture upon his face, nor a pant from his broad, well-opened chest, gave token of the slightest inconvenience from the violent exercise he went through. On the contrary, as he got warm in the harness, he seemed to play better, to run faster, to catch the ball with greater address, and strike it with more force. Sometimes he stood close to the wall, when a mighty blow from the strong arm of the dragoon sent the ball scores of yards in his rear. It appeared impossible that he should arrive soon enough to strike it. But before it could rebound, he was behind it, and a blow of his horny palm, less forcible perhaps, but more dexterously applied than the one his opponent had given, sent it career-ing back to the wall with greater swiftness than it had left

it. He rarely struck the ball in the air, even when the opportunity offered, but allowed it to rebound—a less dashing, but a surer game than he would perhaps have played, had he not considered the honour of “*NAVARRA LA BELLA*” to be at stake, represented in his person. Again, when the ball fell near the wall, he would sometimes swing his arm as though about to strike it violently, and, when the dragoon already began to retire in the direction he expected it to take, he would change his apparent intention, and drop it gently just above the line, so that his opponent, although rushing up in desperate haste, could scarcely arrive in time to avoid being put out. It was by a feint of this description that the second game was decided in favour of the Navarrese.

“*Viva la Navarra!*” shouted the winner, bounding like a startled roebuck three or four feet from the ground, in front of the discomfited soldier.

“*Viva el demonio!*” growled the latter in reply. “Do you think, because you have beaten me to-day, thanks to your herring guts and dog’s hide, that you could do the same if I were in training, or had a month’s practice? You would find it very different, Master Paco.”

“*Viva la Navarra!*” repeated Paco, chucking the small hard ball up into the air, to a height at which it appeared scarce bigger than a bullet. Then, replying to the words of the dragoon, “At your orders, Señor Velasquez,” said he, “I shall pass through Tudela some time next month, and will give you your revenge.”

And, catching the ball as it fell, the Navarrese, whom victory had put into extravagant spirits, tossed it from one hand to the other, caught it behind his back, and performed various other small feats of address, looking the while at the corporal with a jeering smile, which greatly aggravated his irritation.

“ *Pues,*” said Velasquez at last, after gazing at Paco for the space of a minute with a stern look, which was insufficient, however, to make the other lower his eyes, or alter the expression of his countenance: “ Well, what do you stare at? Oh! I forgot—you may well stare. It is the first time that you have seen an Asturian caballero beaten at any thing by a cur of a Navarrese.”

“ Not at all,” replied the muleteer coolly; “ your Señoria is mistaken. It is only the first time that I have seen an Asturian *caballero* with a pipeclayed belt over his shoulder, and a corporal’s bars upon his arm.”

And he broke out into one of those wild shrill laughs of scorn and defiance with which the peasant soldiers of Navarre have so often, during recent Spanish wars, caused the rocks and ravines of their native province to ring again.

“ *Hijo de zorra!*” muttered the soldier, enraged beyond endurance by this last taunt; and drawing back his right arm, he dealt so heavy and unexpected a blow upon the breast of the muleteer, that the latter reeled a couple of paces backwards, and then fell headlong and with considerable violence to the ground. The dragoon gazed for an instant at the fallen man, as if expecting him to rise and attack him in turn; but, seeing that he did not do so, he turned round and walked slowly in the direction of his charger.

He had taken but a few steps when the Navarrese sprang to his feet, and thrust his hand into the red sash which girded his waist, as though seeking a weapon. He found none, and, instantly darting forward, he passed the soldier, and reached his mules a moment sooner than the former did his horse. The next instant a long brown barrel was projected across the packsaddles, and behind it was seen the blue cap and pale countenance of Paco, who, with glittering eye, and face livid from fury, took a deadly aim at the sol-

dier, now standing beside the shoulder of his charger. Without a moment's hesitation the Navarrese pulled the trigger. As he did so, the dragoon, suddenly aware of his danger, threw himself on one side, and at the same time his horse, either startled by the movement or tormented by a fly, tossed his head violently. The muleteer's bullet, intended for the rider, entered the brain of the steed. There was a convulsive quivering of the animal's whole frame, and then, before the smoke cleared away, the horse fell over so heavily and suddenly that Velasquez was borne down under him. The soldier lay with the whole weight of the expiring animal upon his legs and thighs; and, before he could attempt to extricate himself, the Navarrese, a large dagger-shaped knife gleaming in his hand, sprang across the space that separated him from his antagonist. The fate of the latter would speedily have been decided, had not the innkeeper, his wife, and the young travellers, who had observed with much interest these rapidly occurring incidents, thrown themselves between Paco and the object of his wrath.

"Out of the way!" roared the infuriated muleteer. "He has struck me, and by the Holy Trinity I'll have his blood! He has struck *me*, a free-born Navarrese!" repeated he, striking his own breast with the points of his fingers, one of the expressive and customary gestures of his countrymen.

"Let him be, Señor Don Paco!" yelled the ventero and his wife, greatly alarmed at the prospect of a murder in broad daylight and at their very threshold. "You have done enough already to send you to the galleys. Get on your mules, and ride away before worse comes of it."

"*A los infiernos!*" shouted Paco. "As the horse is, so shall be the rider." And he gave a long sweep of his arm, making the bright blade of his knife flash in the last red sun-rays like a curved line of burnished gold. The

point of the weapon passed within an inch or two of the innkeeper, who started back with a cry of alarm. At the same moment the wrist of the Navarrese was caught in a firm grasp by the elder of the two travellers, and the knife was wrested from his hand. The muleteer turned like a madman upon his new antagonist. The latter had laid aside the hat that shaded his face, and now fixed his eyes upon the angry countenance of the Navarrese.

“Do you not know me, Paco?” said he, repulsing the first furious onset of the muleteer.

Paco stared at him for a moment with a look of doubt and astonishment.

“Don Luis!” he exclaimed.

“The same,” replied the stranger. “You have been too hasty, Paco, and we expose ourselves to blame by not detaining you to answer for your attempt on yonder soldier’s life. But you had some provocation, and I, for one, am willing to take the risk. Begone, and that instantly.”

“I shall do your bidding, Señorito,” said Paco, “were it only for old acquaintance sake. But let that cowardly Asturian beware how he meets me in the mountains. I have missed him once, but will answer for not doing so again.”

“And you,” retorted the soldier, whom the innkeeper and a peasant had dragged from under the dead horse, and placed upon a bench, where he sat rubbing his legs, which were numbed and bruised by the weight that had fallen upon them — “and you, have a care how you show yourself in Tudela. If there is a stirrup-leather or sword-scarbard in the garrison, I promise you as sound a thrashing as you ever yet received.”

The Navarrese, who had returned to his mules and was busied reloading his gun, snapped his fingers scornfully at the menace. Don Luis walked up to him.

"Listen, Paco," said he, in a low voice, "take my advice, and keep out of the way for a while. Are you still in the service of Count Villabuena?"

"No, Señor," replied the man, "I have left his Señoria, and the mules are my own. I shall pass near the Count's house to-morrow, if you have aught to send."

"I have nothing," answered Don Luis. "Should you see any of the family, it is unnecessary to mention our meeting."

Paco nodded his head significantly, seated himself sideways on one of the mules, his gun across his knees, and, leading the other by the bridle, trotted at a brisk pace down a mountain path nearly opposite to the venta. Ten minutes later the dragoon, having regained the use of his legs, resumed his boots, took saddle and valise on his shoulders, and started on foot for his garrison.

The sun had set, and the twilight passed away, the night was clear and starlight, but moonless, when Luis and his companion left the venta and resumed their progress northwards. After following the highway for a short league, they took a cross-road, on either side of which the richly cultivated plain was sprinkled with farm-houses, and with a few country villas. In spite of the darkness, increased by the overhanging foliage of the fruit-trees that on either hand bordered the road, Luis moved rapidly and confidently forward, in the manner of one perfectly acquainted with the ground; and presently, leaving the beaten track, he passed through a plantation of young trees, crossed a field, and arrived with his companion at a low hedge surrounding a spacious garden. Leaping this boundary, the young men penetrated some distance into the enclosure, and soon found themselves within fifty yards of a house, whose white walls were partially visible, rising out of the thick garland of trees and bushes that embowered the building. Several of the

windows were lighted up, and the sound of music reached the ears of Luis and his companion.

"This is far enough, Mariano," said the former. "To the right, amongst the trees, you will find an old moss-grown bench, upon which, in happier days, I have often sat. There await my return."

"Yet a little further," replied Mariano. "Who knows what reception the Count may give you?"

"I shall not see the Count," answered Luis; "and if by chance I should, there is nothing to apprehend. But my plan, as I have already explained to you, is only to seek one moment's interview with Rita. I am well acquainted with the arrangements of the house, and you may depend I shall be seen by none whom I wish to avoid."

Mariano turned into the shrubbery, and Luis, with rapid but silent step, advanced towards the villa, favoured in his clandestine approach by the darkness of the night, and by the trees of the thickly-planted garden.

The house was a square edifice, without balconies, and the illuminated windows were those of the first floor. On the side on which Luis first approached the building, they were closed, but, upon moving noiselessly round to the front, he perceived one which the fineness of the weather, still mild and genial, although at the end of September, had induced the occupants of the room to leave open. From it issued the sound of laughter and merriment. This was presently hushed, and two voices, accompanied by guitars, sang a lively *seguidilla*, of which, at the end of each piquant couplet, the listeners testified their approbation by a hum of mirthful applause. Before the song was over, Luis had sought and found a means of observing what passed within doors. Grasping the lower branch of a tree which grew within a few feet of the house corner, he swung himself up amongst the foliage. A large bough ex-

tended horizontally below the open window, and by climbing along this, he was enabled to look completely into the apartment; whilst, owing to the thickness of the leafage and the dark colour of his dress, there was scarcely a possibility of his being discovered.

The room was occupied by about twenty persons, the majority of whom were visitors, inhabitants of Tudela or of neighbouring country-houses. With four or five exceptions, the party consisted of men, for the most part elderly or middle-aged. One of the ladies and a young officer of the royal guard were the singers, and their performance seemed partially to interrupt the conversation of a group of the seniors seated round a card-table at the further end of the apartment. The cards, however, if they had been used at all, had long been thrown aside, and replaced by a discussion carried on in low tones, and with an earnestness of countenance and gesture, which gave to those engaged in it the appearance rather of conspirators than of friends met together for the enjoyment of each other's society. The ladies, and the younger men, did not let the gravity of their elders interfere with their pleasures. Song and dance, pointed epigram and witty repartee, all the varied resources which Spaniards know so well how to bring into play, and which render a Spanish *tertulia* so agreeable, had been in turn resorted to. When the seguidilla, during the continuance of which Luis had gained his post of observation, was brought to a close, there ensued a break in the amusements of the evening. The younger members of the company, whose conversation had previously been general, separated into groups of two or three persons; and in more than one of those composed of the former number, the flashing eye, coquettish smile, and rapidly significant motions of the fan, bespoke the existence of an animated flirtation.

Two ladies, neither of whom could have seen more than eighteen summers, now left the sofa upon which they had been seated, and, with arms intertwined, approached the open window. Luis remained motionless as the leaves that surrounded him, which were undisturbed by a breath of wind. The ladies leaned forward over the window-sill, enjoying the freshness of the night; and one of them, the lively brunette who had taken a part in the song, plucked some sprays of jasmine that reared their pointed leaves and white blossoms in front of the window, and entwined them in the hair of her companion—a pale and pensive beauty, in whose golden locks and blue eyes the Gothic blood of old Spain was yet to be traced. Presently she was interrupted in this fanciful occupation by a voice within the room calling upon her to sing. She obeyed the summons, and her friend remained alone at the window.

No sooner was this the case than a slight rustling occurred amongst the branches of the tree, and the name of “Rita” was uttered in a cautious whisper. The lady started, and but half suppressed a cry of terror. The next instant the leaves were put aside, and the light from the apartment fell upon the countenance of Luis, who, with uplifted finger, warned the agitated girl to restrain her emotion.

“Santa Virgen!” she exclaimed, leaning far out of the window, and speaking in a hurried whisper, “this is madness, Luis. My father is unchanged in his sentiments. I dread his anger should he find you here.”

“I depart instantly,” replied Luis, “if you promise me an interview. I am about to leave Spain—perhaps for ever; I cannot go without bidding you farewell. You will not refuse me a meeting which may be our last.”

“What mean you?” exclaimed the lady. “Why leave

Spain, and when? But we shall be overheard. To-morrow my father goes to Tudela. Be here at mid-day. Brigida will admit you."

She held out her hand, which Luis pressed to his lips. At that moment the clatter of a horse's hoofs, rapidly approaching, was heard upon the hard ground of the avenue. The lady hastily left the window. Luis again concealed himself behind the screen of foliage. Scarcely had he done so, when a horseman dashed up to the house, forced his steed up the broad steps leading to the door, and, without dismounting or looking for a bell or other means of announcing his arrival, struck several blows upon the oaken panels with the but of his heavy riding-whip. Whilst the party above-stairs hurried to the windows, and strove to discern the features of this uncereemonious visiter, a servant opened a small grated wicket in the door, and inquired the stranger's pleasure.

"Is the Conde de Villabuena at home?" demanded the horseman. "I must see him instantly."

"The name of your Señoria?" inquired the domestic.

"It is unnecessary. Say that I have a message to him from friends at Madrid."

The servant disappeared. In another moment his place was occupied by a grave, stern-looking man, between fifty and sixty years of age.

"I am Count Villabuena," said he; "what is your business?"

The stranger bent forward over his horse's mane, so as to bring his face close to the wicket, and uttered three words in a tone audible only to the Count, who replied to them by an exclamation of surprise. The door was immediately opened, and Villabuena stood beside the horseman.

"When?" said he.

“Yesterday. I have ridden night and day to bring you the intelligence, and must now push on to the interior of Navarre. At the same time as myself, others of our friends started, north and south, east and west. Early this morning, Santos Ladron heard it at Valladolid, and Merino in Castile. To-day the news has reached Vittoria; this night they will be at Bilboa and Tolosa. From the northern provinces most is expected; but ‘El Rey y la Religion’ is a rallying-cry that will rouse all Spaniards worthy of the name. You are prepared for the event, and know what to do. Farewell, and success attend us!”

Setting spurs to his horse, the stranger galloped down the avenue at the same rapid pace at which he had arrived. The Count re-entered the house; and as he did so, Luis dropped from his tree, and hurried to rejoin Mariano. In another hour they were again at the venta.

Luis Herrera was the son of a Castilian gentleman, who had suffered much, both in person and property, for his steady adherence to the constitutional cause in Spain. Severely wounded whilst fighting against the Royalists and their French allies in 1823, Don Manuel Herrera with difficulty escaped to England, taking with him his only son, then eleven years old. In 1830 he changed his residence to the south of France, and thence, taking advantage of his proximity to the frontier, and wishing his son's education to be completed in Spain, he dispatched Luis to Madrid, with a recommendation to the Conde de Villabuena, one of Don Manuel's oldest friends, notwithstanding that their political principles were diametrically opposed. The Count welcomed Luis kindly, and received him into his house, where for some months he prosecuted his studies in company with the young Villabuenas, and, at the end of that time, went with them to the university of Salamanca. The vacations were passed by the young

men either at the Count's mansion at Madrid, or at a country residence near Tudela, north of which, in the central valleys of his native province of Navarre, the Conde de Villabuena owned extensive estates. The Count was a widower, and, besides his two sons, had an only daughter, who, at the time of Luis's arrival, was in her sixteenth year, and who added to great personal attractions a share of accomplishment and instruction larger than is usually found even amongst the higher classes of Spanish women. During the first sojourn of Luis at the Count's house, he was naturally thrown a great deal into Doña Rita's society, and a reciprocal attachment grew up between them, which, if it occasionally afforded the young Villabuenas a subject of good-humoured raillery, on the other hand was unobserved or uncared for by the Count — a stern silent man, whose thoughts and time were engrossed by political intrigues. When Luis went to Salamanca, his attachment to Rita, instead of becoming weakened or obliterated, acquired strength from absence; and she, on her part, as each vacation approached, unconsciously looked forward with far more eagerness to the return of Herrera than to that of her brothers.

The autumn of 1832 arrived, and the Count and his family, including Luis, were assembled at the villa near Tudela. The attachment existing between Rita and Luis had become evident to all who knew them; and even the Count himself seemed occasionally, by a quiet glance and grave smile, to recognise and sanction its existence. Nor was there any obvious or strong reason for disapproval. The family of Herrera was ancient and honourable; and, although Don Manuel's estates had been confiscated when he fled the country, he had previously remitted to England a sum that secured him a moderate independence. The state of things in the Peninsula was daily becoming more

favourable to the hopes of political exiles. The declining health of Ferdinand had thrown the reins of government into the hands of Queen Christina, who, to increase the number of her adherents, and ensure her daughter's succession to the throne, favoured the return to Spain of the Liberal party. Although Don Manuel, who was known to be obstinate and violent in his political views, had not yet been included in the amnesties published, it was thought that he speedily would be ; and then time and importunity, and an adherence to the established order of things, might procure him the restitution of some part of his confiscated property.

It chanced that on the fourth day after the arrival of Luis and the Villabuenas from Salamanca, the two latter rode over to the Ebro, below Tudela, for the purpose of bathing. Indifferent swimmers, they were unaccustomed to so rapid and powerful a stream. A peasant, who observed two horses tied to a tree, and some clothes upon the grass by the river side, but who could see nothing of the owners, suspected an accident, and gave the alarm. A search was instituted, and the dead bodies of the unfortunate young men were found upon the sandy shore of an island some distance down the river.

This melancholy event had an important influence on the position of Luis Herrera in the Villabuena family, and on his future fortunes. Mingled with the natural grief felt by the Count at his children's untimely death were the pangs of disappointed pride and ambition. He had reckoned upon the gallant and promising young men, thus prematurely snatched away, for the continuance and aggrandisement of his ancient name. Upon Rita he had hitherto scarcely bestowed a thought. She would marry—honourably of course, richly if possible ; but even in this last respect he would not be inflexible, for where his pride of

birth did not interfere, Villabuena was not an unkind father. But the death of his sons brought about great changes. The next heir to his title and estates was a distant and unmarried cousin, and to him the Count determined to marry his daughter, whose beauty and large fortune in money and unentailed estates, rendered any objection to the match on the part of her kinsman a most improbable occurrence. As a first step towards the accomplishment of this scheme, the Count resolved at once to put an end to what he considered a mere childish fancy. Within a week after the death of his sons, he had a conversation with young Herrera, in which he informed him of his intentions with regard to his daughter, and pointed out to him the necessity of forgetting her. In vain did Luis declare this to be impossible, and plead the strength which his attachment had acquired by his long permitted intercourse with Rita. The Count cared little for such lover-like arguments; he assured Luis that he was mistaken, that time and absence brought oblivion in their train, and that after a brief separation, he would wonder at the change in his sentiments, and laugh at the importance he had attached to a mere boyish caprice. It so happened, that on the day preceding that upon which this conversation took place, a letter had been received from Don Manuel Herrera, announcing his speedy return to Spain, the much-desired permission having at length been obtained. In order to give Luis an opportunity of speedily testing the effects of absence, the Count proposed that he should at once set out for the French frontier to meet his father. Under existing circumstances, he said, it was undesirable that he should remain beneath the same roof with his daughter longer than could be avoided.

Although bitterly deploring the prospect of an immediate and lasting separation from Rita, Luis had no choice but to

adopt the course proposed; nor would his pride have allowed him to remain in the Count's house an instant longer than his presence there was acceptable. He feared lest a last interview with Rita should be denied him, but in this he was mistaken. Villabuena contented himself with repeating to his daughter the communication he had already made to Luis. When the latter sought his mistress, he found her in tears and great affliction. The blow was so sudden and unexpected, that she could scarcely believe its reality; still less could she bring herself to think that the Count would persist in his cruel resolution. "He will surely relent," she said, "when he sees how unhappy his decision makes me; but should he not do so, rest assured, Luis, that I never will be forced into this odious marriage. Sooner than submit to it, a convent shall receive me." And once more repeating the vows of constancy they had so often interchanged, the lovers separated. At daybreak upon the following morning, Luis set out for Bayonne.

The joy experienced by Don Manuel Herrera upon once more treading his native soil, did not so engross him as to prevent his observing the melancholy of his son. In reply to his inquiries, Luis informed him of his attachment to Rita, and of the interdict which the Count had put upon its continuance. Don Manuel was indignant at what he termed the selfish and unfeeling conduct of Villabuena, in thus sacrificing his daughter's happiness to his own ambition. He tried to rouse the pride of Luis, and to convert his regrets into indignation; but, not succeeding, he resolved to try the effect of change of scene and constant occupation. He set out with his son for Old Castile, of which he was a native, and undertook various journeys through the province in search of a small estate, such as his means would permit him to purchase, and where he might in future reside. He

at last found one a few leagues to the south of Burgos. The purchase completed, there were still many arrangements to make before Don Manuel could enjoy the peaceful country life that he had planned for himself, and, in making these arrangements, he took care to find his son abundant and varied employment. But his well-meant efforts were in vain: Luis could not detach his thoughts from one all-engrossing subject; and at last, although Count Villabuena had expressly forbidden any correspondence between his daughter and young Herrera, the latter, after some weeks' absence, unable any longer to resist his desire to hear from Rita, ventured to write to her. The letter was intercepted by the Count, and returned unopened, with a few haughty lines expressive of his indignation at the ingratitude of Luis, who requited the kindness he had received at his hands by endeavouring to thwart his plans and seduce the affections of his daughter. The terms in which this epistle was couched roused the ire of Don Manuel, who, in his turn, forbade his son to expose himself to similar insults by any communication with the Count or his daughter. Shortly afterwards Luis returned to Salamanca to complete his studies.

The profession of the law, to which young Herrera was destined, had never had any charms for him. His own inclinations pointed to a military career, which, on various occasions, he had urged his father to allow him to adopt; but Don Manuel had invariably refused his request, alleging the poor prospect of advancement in time of peace, and in a service in which nearly all promotion was gained by interest and court favour. Nevertheless, from his earliest youth Luis had devoted his leisure hours to the attainment of accomplishments qualifying him for the trade of war. He was the boldest horseman, most skilful swordsman, and best shot in the University of Salamanca. His superiority

in these respects, his decided character, and agreeable manners, had gained him considerable popularity amongst his fellow-students, who frequently expressed their surprise that one whose vocation was evidently military should abide by the dusty folios and dry intricacies of the law.

More insupportable than ever, did his studies now appear to Luis; but yet he persevered in them for several months, endeavouring, by strenuous application, to forget his hopeless love. Weary at length of the effort, he determined to abandon a pursuit so uncongenial to his tastes, and to seek a more active course of life, and one for which he felt himself better suited. His plan was, to repair to Africa, and endeavour to obtain a commission in one of the foreign corps which the French were raising for their campaign against the Bedouins. Should he fail in this, he would serve as a volunteer, and trust to courage and merit for procuring him advancement. Previously, however, to the execution of this scheme, he resolved to see Rita once more, ascertain from her own lips whether there was a chance of the Count's relenting, and, should there be none, bid her a last farewell. He would then return to his father's house, and obtain Don Manuel's sanction to his project.

Since the unfortunate death of the young Villabuenas, Herrera's chief intimate at the university had been Mariano Torres, a hot-headed, warm-hearted Arragonese, entirely devoted to Luis, to whom he looked up as to a model of perfection. To this young man Luis had confided his love for Rita, and her father's opposition, and to him he now communicated his new plans. To his infinite surprise, scarcely had he done so, when Mariano, instead of expressing regret at his approaching departure, threw his student's hat to the ceiling, tore off his gown, and declared his intention of accompanying his friend to Africa, or to any other

part of the world to which he chose to betake himself. Luis pressed him to abandon so mad a resolution; but Torres persisted in it, protesting that it would suit his taste much better to fight the Bedouins than to become a bachelor of arts, and that he had always intended to leave the university with his friend, and to accompany him whithersoever he might go. Trusting that, by the time they should reach Navarre, Mariano's enthusiasm would cool down, and his resolution change, Luis at length yielded, and the two friends left Salamanca together. Travelling by the public conveyances, they reached Valladolid, and subsequently the town of Soria, whence they had still nearly twenty leagues of high-road to Tudela. The path across the mountains being considerably shorter,—and to diminish the risk of being seen by persons who might inform the Count of his arrival,—Luis resolved to complete the journey on foot; and, after two days' march, the young men reached the neighbourhood of Count Villabuena's residence.

The church and convent clocks of the right Catholic city of Tudela had not yet chimed out the hour of noon, when Luis, impatient for the interview promised by Rita, entered the Count's domain by the same path as on the previous evening. Before he came in sight of the house, he was met at an angle of the shrubbery by her he sought.

"I was sure you would take this path," said she, with a smile in which melancholy was mingled with pleasure at seeing her lover; "it was your favourite in days gone by. Our interview must be very brief. My father was to have remained at Tudela till evening, but something has deranged his plans. He sat up the whole night in close conference with his friends. At daybreak two couriers were despatched, and the Count rode out, without having been in bed. He may return at any moment."

Luis drew the arm of his mistress through his own, and

they slowly walked down an alley of the garden. Rita had little to tell him favourable to the hopes which, in spite of himself, he still cherished. The appeals she had ventured to make to her father's affection, and to his regard for her happiness, had been met by severe reproof. Her evident depression and melancholy remained unnoticed, or, at least, unadverted to by the Count. All that she said only confirmed Luis in his resolution of seeking high distinction or an honourable death in a foreign service. He was deliberating, with eyes fixed upon the ground, on the best manner of breaking his intentions to Rita, when an exclamation of alarm from her lips made him look up, and he saw Villabuena crossing, on horseback, the end of the walk along which they were advancing. The Count had evidently seen and recognised them.

Herrera's resolution was instantly taken. He would seek the Count's presence, take upon himself the whole blame of his clandestine meeting with Rita, and appease his anger by informing him of his proposed self-banishment. But before he had succeeded in calming Rita's fears, he again perceived her father, who had left his horse, and advanced slowly towards them, with a grave, but not an angry countenance. On his near approach, Luis was about to address him ; by a wave of his hand Villabuena enjoined silence.

"Return to the house, Rita," said he, in a calm voice : "and you, Señor de Herrera, remain here ; I would speak with you."

Tremblingly, and with one last lingering look at Luis, Rita withdrew.

"We will walk, sir, if you please," said the Count ; and the two men walked for some distance, side by side, and in silence ; Villabuena apparently plunged in reflection, Luis wondering at his forbearance, and impatient for explanation.

"You are surprised," said the Count at last, "after all that has passed, that I show so little resentment at your uninvited presence here, and at Rita's infringement of my commands."

Luis would have spoken, but Villabuena resumed, "You will be still more astonished to learn, that there is a possibility of your attachment receiving my sanction."

Herrera started, and his face was lighted up with sudden rapture.

"You will of course have heard," continued the Count, "of the important intelligence received here last night, and with which, this morning, all the country rings. I mean the death of Ferdinand VII."

"I had not heard of it," replied Luis, much surprised. The desperate state of the King's health was well known, but his malady had lasted so long, that men had almost left off expecting his death.

"I know I can depend upon your honour, Luis," said the Count, "and I am therefore about to speak to you with a confidence which I should repose in few so young and inexperienced."

Luis bowed.

"Although," resumed Villabuena, "his Majesty Charles the Fifth is at this moment absent from Spain, his faithful subjects will not allow his absence to be prejudicial to him. They will vindicate his just rights, and overturn the contemptible faction which, headed by an intriguing woman, supports the unfounded claims of a sickly infant. In anticipation of Ferdinand's death, all necessary measures have been taken; and, before three days elapse, you will see a flame lighted up through the land, which will speedily consume and destroy the enemies of Spain, and of her rightful monarch. Navarre and Biscay, Valentia and Arragon, Catalonia and Castile, will rise almost to a man in defence

of their King; the other provinces must follow their example, or be compelled to submission. Confident of success, it yet behoves us to neglect no means of securing it; nor are we so blinded as to think that the faction which at present holds the reins of government will resign them without a struggle. Avoiding over-confidence, therefore, which so often leads to failure, each man must put his shoulder to the wheel, and, regardless of private sacrifices, contribute his best efforts to the one great end. What I propose to you is this. Time was when our universities were the strongholds of loyalty and religion; but that time is unfortunately past, and the baneful doctrines of republicanism and equality have found their way even into those nurseries of our priesthood and statesmen. We are well informed that at Salamanca especially, many of the students, even of the better class, incline to the self-styled Liberal party. You, Luis, are ready of speech, bold and prompt in action, and, moreover, you have great influence amongst your fellow-students. Return, then, to Salamanca, and exert that influence to bring back into the right path those who have been led astray. Urge the just claims of Charles V., hold out prospects of military glory and distinction, and of the gratitude of an admiring country. Let your efforts be chiefly directed to gain over young men of wealthy and influential families, and to induce them to take up arms for the King. Form them into a squadron, of which you shall have the command, and the private soldiers of which shall rank as officers in the army, and subsequently be transferred to other corps to act as such. Appoint a place of rendezvous; and, when your men are assembled there, march them to join the nearest division of the Royalist army. I guarantee you a captain's commission; and as soon as the King, with whom I have some influence, arrives in Spain, I will strongly recommend you

to his favour. Our campaign, however brief, must afford opportunities of distinction to brave men who seek them. With your energy, and with the natural military talents which I am persuaded you possess, high rank, honours, and riches, may speedily be yours. And when Charles V., firmly seated on the throne of Spain, points you out to me as one of those to whom he owes his crown, and as a man whom he delights to honour, I will no longer refuse you my daughter's hand."

However distant the perspective of happiness thus offered to his view, and although the avenue leading to it was beset with dangers and uncertainties, it promised to realise the ardent hopes which Luis Herrera had once ventured to indulge. Sanguine and confident, he would at once have caught at the Count's proposal, but for one consideration that flashed across his mind. He was himself wedded to no political creed, and had as yet scarcely bestowed a thought upon the different parties into which his countrymen were split. But his father, who had so strenuously adhered to the Liberal side, who had poured out his blood with Mina, fought side by side with Riego, sacrificed his property, and endured a long and wearisome exile for conscience and his opinion's sake—what would be his feelings if he saw his son range himself beneath the banner of absolutism? The struggle in the mind of Luis, between love on the one hand and filial duty and affection on the other, was too severe and too equally balanced to be instantly decided. He remained silent, and the Count, mistaking the cause of his hesitation, resumed.

"You are surprised," said he, "to find me so willing to abandon my dearest projects for the sake of a remote advantage to the King's cause. But remember that I promise nothing—all is contingent on your own conduct and success. And although you may have thought me unfeel-

ing and severe, I shall gladly, if possible, indulge the inclinations of my only surviving child."

It required all Herrera's firmness and sense of duty to prevent him from yielding to the temptation held out, and pledging himself at once to the cause of Charles V.

"You will not expect me, Señor Conde," said he, "to give an immediate answer to a proposal of such importance. I feel sincerely grateful, but must crave a short delay for consideration."

"Let that delay be brief as possible," said Villabuena. "In the present circumstances, the value of assistance will be doubled by its promptness. When love and loyalty are both in one scale," added he, with a slight smile, "methinks a decision were easy."

They had approached the garden gate, and Luis, desirous of solitude, to arrange his thoughts and reflect on his future conduct, took his leave. The Count held out his hand with some of his former cordiality.

"You will write to me from Salamanca?" said he.

Herrera bowed his head, and then, fearful lest his assent should be misconstrued, he replied—

"From Salamanca, or from elsewhere, you shall certainly hear from me, Señor Conde, and that with all speed."

The Count nodded, and turned towards the house, whilst Luis retook the road to the venta.

He found Mariano impatiently awaiting his return, and eager to learn the result of his interview with Rita. Upon being informed of the proposal made to Luis, Torres, seeing in it only a means of happiness for his friend, strongly urged its acceptance. To this, however, Luis could not make up his mind; and finally, after some deliberation, he resolved to proceed to Old Castile, and endeavour to obtain his father's consent to his joining the party of Don Carlos.

Should he succeed in this, of which he could not but entertain a doubt, he would no longer hesitate, but at once inform the Count of his decision, and hasten to Salamanca to put his instructions into execution. Without further delay, the two friends set out for Tarazona, where they trusted to find means of speedy conveyance to the residence of Don Manuel.

In the kingdom of Old Castile, and more especially in its mountainous portions and the districts adjacent to the Ebro, an extraordinary bustle and agitation were observable during the first days of October, 1833. There was great furbishing of rusty muskets, an eager search for cartridges, much dusting of old uniforms that had long served but as hiding-places for moths, and which were now donned by men, many of whom seemed ill at ease in their military equipments. For ten years Spain had been tranquil, if not happy; but now, as if even this short period of repose were too long for the restless spirit of her sons, a new pretext for discord had been found, and an ominous stir, the forerunner of civil strife, was perceptible throughout the land. Whilst Santos Ladron, an officer of merit, who had served through the whole of the war against Napoleon, raised the standard of Charles V. in Navarre, various partisans did the same in the country south of the Ebro. In the north-eastern corner of Castile, known as the Rioja, Basilio Garcia, agent for the Pope's bulls for the district of Soria—a man destitute of military knowledge, and remarkable only for his repulsive exterior and cold-blooded ferocity—collected and headed a small body of insurgents; whilst, in other parts of the same province, several battalions of the old Royalist volunteers—a loose, ill-disciplined militia,

as motley and unsoldierlike in appearance as they were unsteady and inefficient in the field—ranged themselves under the orders of a general officer named Cuevillas, and of the veteran Merino. To these soon joined themselves various individuals of the half-soldier half-bandit class, so numerous in Spain—men who had served in former wars, and asked no better than again to enact the scenes of bloodshed and pillage which were their element. The popularity and acknowledged skill of Merino as a guerilla leader, secured to him the services of many of these daring and desperate ruffians, who flocked joyously to the banner of the soldier-priest, under whose orders some of them had already fought.

Through a tract of champaign country in the province of Burgos, a column of these newly-assembled troops was seen to march early upon the third morning after the interview between Luis Herrera and Count Villabuena. It consisted of a battalion of the Realista militia, for the most part middle-aged citizens, who, although they had felt themselves bound to obey the call to arms, seemed but indifferently pleased at having left their families and occupations. Their equipment was various : few had a complete uniform ; most of them displayed some part of one ; all had belts and cartridge-box, musket and bayonet. Although they had as yet gone but a short distance, many of them appeared foot-sore and weary ; and it was pretty evident that, in the event of a campaign, their ranks would be thinned nearly as much by the fatigues of the march as by the fire of the enemy. In front and rear of the battalion marched a squadron of cavalry, of a far more soldierly aspect than the foot-soldiers, although even amongst them but little uniformity of costume was found. The bronzed and bearded physiognomy, athletic form and upright carriage, which bespeak the veteran soldier, were not wanting

in their ranks; their horses were active and hardy, their arms clean and serviceable.

At the head of the column, a few paces in advance, rode a small group of officers, the chief amongst whom was only to be distinguished by the deference shown him by his companions. Insignia of rank he had none, nor any indications of his military profession, beyond the heavy sabre that dangled against the flank of his powerful black charger. His dress was entirely civilian, consisting of a long surtout, the worse for wear, and a round hat. Heavy spurs upon his heels, and an ample cloak, now strapped across his holsters, completed the equipment of the Cura Merino, in whose hard and rigid features, and wiry person, scarcely a sign of decay or infirmity was visible after more than sixty years of life, a large portion of which had been passed amidst the fatigues and hardships of incessant campaigning.

As if infected by the sombre and taciturn character of their leader, the party of officers had ridden for some time in silence, when they came in sight of a house situated at a short distance from the road, and of a superior description to the *caserias* and peasants' cottages which they had hitherto passed. It was a building of moderate size, with an appearance of greater comfort and neatness than is usually found in Spanish houses. Stables adjoined it, and, at some distance in its rear, a range of barns and outhouses served to store the crops produced by the extensive tract of well-cultivated land, in the centre of which the dwelling stood. The front of the house was partially masked from the road by an orchard, and behind it a similar growth of fruit-trees seemed intended to intercept the keen blasts from a line of mountains which rose, grey and gloomy, at the distance of a few miles.

"Who lives yonder?" abruptly inquired Merino, pointing to the house, which he had gazed at for some time from under his bushy eyebrows. The officer to whom the question was addressed referred to another of the party, a native of that part of the country.

"Señor de Herrera," was the answer. "We have been riding for some minutes through his property. He purchased the estate about a year ago, on his return from France."

"What did he in France?"

"Lived there, which he could not have done here unless he had been bullet-proof, or had a neck harder than the iron collar of the garrote."

"Herrera!" repeated the Cura musingly—"I know the name, but there are many who bear it. There was a Manuel Herrera who sat in the Cortes in the days of the Constitutionals, and afterwards commanded a battalion of their rabble. You do not mean him?"

"The same, General," replied the officer, addressing Merino by the rank he held in the Spanish army since the war of Independence. A most unpriestly ejaculation escaped the lips of the Cura.

"Manuel Herrera," he repeated: "the dog, the *negro*,* the friend of the scoundrel Riego! I will hang him at his own door!"

All the old hatreds and bitter party animosities of Merino wakened into new life at the name of a former opponent. His eyes flashed, his lips quivered with rage, and he half turned his horse as if to proceed to Herrera's house and execute his threat. The impulse was checked almost as soon as felt.

* *Negro*, or black, was the term commonly applied to the Liberals by their antagonists.

"Another time will do," said he, with a grim smile: "Let us once get Charles V. at Madrid, and we will make short work of this Herrera, and of all who resemble him." And the Cura continued his march, silent as before.

He had proceeded but a short half mile when the officer commanding the cavalry rode up beside him.

"We have no forage, General," said he—"not a blade of straw, or a grain in our corn-sacks. Shall I send on an orderly, that we may find it ready at the halting-place?"

"No!" replied Merino. "Send a party to the house we passed ten minutes ago. Let them press all the carts they find there, load them with corn, and bring them after us."

The officer fell back to his squadron, and the next minute a subaltern and twenty men detached themselves from the column, and, at a brisk trot, retraced their steps along the road. Arrived in sight of the house, they leaped their horses over a narrow ditch dividing the road from the fields, and struck across the latter in a straight line, compelled, however, by the heaviness of the ground, to slacken their pace to a walk. They had not accomplished more than half the distance to be traversed, when they heard the clang of a bell, continuously rung; and this was followed by the appearance of two men, who issued from the stables and out-buildings, and hurried to the house. Scarcely had they entered when the shutters of the lower windows were pushed to, and the heavy door closed and barred. The soldiers were now within a hundred yards of the dwelling.

"Hallo!" cried the officer contemptuously, "they will not stand a siege, will they? The old Don is a black-hearted rebel, but he will hardly be fool enough to resist us."

The trooper was mistaken. The courage of Don Manuel Herrera was of that obstinate and uncalculating character which would have induced him to defend his house, single-

handed, against a much larger force than that now brought against it. When he had learned, three days previously, that risings were taking place in his own neighbourhood in the name of Charles V., he had attached very little importance to the intelligence. An old soldier himself, he entertained the most unmitigated contempt for the Realista volunteers, whom he looked upon as a set of tailors, whose muskets would rather encumber them than injure any body else; and who, on the first appearance of regular troops, would infallibly throw down their arms and betake themselves to their homes. As to the parties of insurgent guerillas which showed themselves at various points of the vicinity, he considered them as mere bandits, profiting by the stir and excitement in the country to exercise their nefarious profession; and, should any such parties attempt to molest him, he fully determined to resist their attacks. In this resolution he now persevered, although he rightly conjectured that the horsemen approaching his house were either the rear-guard or a detachment of the disorderly column whose passage he had observed.

"Hola! Don Manolo!" shouted the officer, halting his party in front of the house; "what scurvy hospitality is this? Why do you fasten doors and ring alarm-bells as if there were more thieves than honest men in the land? We come on a friendly visit, and, instead of welcome and the wine-skin, you shut the gate in our faces. Devilish unfriendly that, Don Manolito!"

The speaker, like many of Merino's followers, was an inhabitant of the neighbouring country. He knew Don Manuel well by name and reputation, and was also known to him as a deserter from the Constitutionalists in 1823, and as one of the most desperate smugglers and outlaws in the province.

"What want you with me, Pedro Rufin?" demanded Don Manuel, appearing at one of the upper windows; "and what means this assemblage of armed men?"

"It means," replied Rufin, "that I have been detached from the division of his Excellency General Merino, to demand from you a certain quantity of maize or barley, or both, for the service of his Majesty King Charles V."

"I know no such persons," retorted Don Manuel, "as General Merino or King Charles V. But I know you well, Rufin, and the advice I give you is to begone, yourself and your companions. We shall have troops here to-day or to-morrow, and the country will be too hot to hold you."

The officer laughed.

"Troops are here already," said he; "you saw our column march by not half an hour ago. But we are in haste. Once more, Señor Herrera, open the door, and that quickly."

"My door opens not at your bidding," replied Don Manuel. "I give you two minutes to draw off your followers. If you are not gone by that time, I fire upon you."

"Morrall," said the officer to one of his men, "your horse is a kicker. Try the strength of the door."

The soldier left the ranks, and turning his raw-boned, vicious-looking chestnut horse with its tail to the house-door, he pressed his knuckles sharply upon the animal's loins, just behind the saddle. The horse lashed out furiously, each kick of his iron-shod heels making the door crack and rattle, and striking out white splinters from the dark surface of the solid oaken planks. At the first kick Don Manuel left the window. The soldiers looked on, laughing till they rolled in their saddles at this novel species of sledge-hammer. Owing, however, to the great strength of the door, and to

the numerous fastenings on its inner side, the kicks of the horse, although several times repeated, failed to burst it open ; and at last the animal, wearied by resistance, relaxed the vigour of its applications.

“ Famous horse that of yours, Morral ! ” said the officer ; “ as good as a locksmith or a six-pounder. Try it again, my boy. You’ve made some ugly marks already. Another round of kicks, and the way is open.”

“ And if another blow is struck upon my door,” said Don Manuel, suddenly reappearing at the window, to the soldier, “ your horse will go home with an empty saddle.”

Again the soldier applied his knuckles to his horse’s back, and the animal gave a tremendous kick. At the same instant a puff of smoke issued from the window, the report of a musket was heard, and the unlucky Morral, shot through the body, fell headlong to the ground.

“ Damnation ! ” roared the officer, firing his pistol ; and immediately his men, without waiting orders, commenced an irregular fire of carbines and pistols against the house. It was replied to with effect from three of the windows. A man fell mortally wounded, and two horses were hit. Rufin, alarmed at this loss, drew his men back under shelter of the trees, till he could decide what course to adopt. It seemed by no means improbable that the Carlists would have to beat a retreat, or at any rate wait the arrival of infantry, which it was not improbable Merino might have sent to their assistance when the sound of the firing reached his ears. The lower windows of the house were protected by strong iron bars ; and, although the defenders were few in number, their muskets, and the shelter behind which they fought, gave them a great advantage over the assailants, whose carbines would not carry far, and who had no cover from the fire of their opponents. At last a plan was devised offering some chance of success. The party dismounted ;

and whilst four men, making a circuit, and concealing themselves behind trees and hedges, got in rear of the building, the others, with the exception of two or three who remained with the horses, advanced towards the front of the house, firing as rapidly as they could, in order, by the smoke and by attracting the attention of the besieged, to cover the manœuvre of their comrades. The stratagem was completely successful. Whilst Don Manuel and his servants answered the fire of their assailants with some effect, the four men got round the house, climbed a wall, found a ladder in an out-building, and applied it to a back window, which they burst open. A shout of triumph, and the report of their pistols, informed their companions of their entrance. The next moment the front door was thrown open, and the guerillas rushed tumultuously into the house.

It was about two hours after these occurrences, that Luis Herrera and Mariano Torres arrived at Don Manuel's residence. They had been delayed upon the road by the disturbed state of the country, which rendered it difficult to procure conveyances, and had at last been compelled to hire a couple of indifferent horses, upon which, accompanied by a muleteer, they had made but slow progress. The news of the Carlist insurrection had somewhat alarmed Luis on account of his father, whom he knew to be in the highest degree obnoxious to many of that party. At the same time he had not yet heard of the perpetration of acts of violence, and was far from anticipating the spectacle that met his eyes when he at last came in view of the Casa Herrera. With an exclamation of horror he forced his horse up a bank bordering the road, and, followed by Mariano, galloped towards the house.

Of the dwelling, so lately a model of rural ease and comfort, the four walls alone now stood. The roof had fallen

in, and the tongues of flame which licked and flickered round the apertures where windows had been, showed that the devouring element was busy completing its work. The adjoining stables, owing to their slighter construction, and to the combustibles they contained, had been still more rapidly consumed. Of them, a heap of smoking ashes and a few charred beams and blackened bricks were all that remained. The paling of the tastefully distributed garden was broken down in several places; the parterres and melon-beds were trampled and destroyed by the hoofs of the Carlist horses, which had been turned in there to feed, or been ridden through in utter wantonness by their brutal owners. The ground in front of the house was strewn with broken furniture, and with articles of wearing apparel, the latter of which appeared to have belonged to the Carlists, and to have been exchanged by them for others of a better description found in the dwelling. Empty bottles, fragments of food, and a couple of wine-skins, the greater part of whose contents had been poured out upon the ground, lay scattered about near the carcass of a horse and three human corpses, two of the latter being those of Carlists, and the third that of one of the defenders of the house. A few peasants stood by, looking on in open-mouthed stupefaction; and above the whole scene of desolation, a thick cloud of black smoke floated like a funeral pall.

In an agony of suspense Luis inquired for his father. The peasant to whom he addressed the question, pointed to the buildings in rear of the house, which the Carlists, weary perhaps of the work of destruction, had left uninjured.

“Don Manuel is there,” said he, “if he still lives.”

The latter part of the sentence was drowned in the noise of the horse's feet, as Luis spurred furiously towards the

buildings indicated, which consisted of barns, and of a small dwelling-house inhabited by his father's steward. On entering the latter his worst fears were realised.

Upon a bed in a room on the ground floor, lay Don Manuel Herrera, apparently insensible. His face was ashy pale, his eyes were closed, his lips blue and pinched. He was partially undressed, and his linen and the bed were stained with blood. A priest stood beside him, a crucifix in one hand, a cordial in the other; whilst an elderly peasant woman held a linen cloth to a wound in the breast of the expiring man. From an adjacent room proceeded the sobbings and lamentations of women and children. With a heart swollen to bursting, Luis approached the bed.

"Father!" he exclaimed, taking Don Manuel's hand, which hung powerless over the side of the couch—"Father, is it thus I find you!"

The voice of his son roused the sufferer from the swoon or lethargy in which he lay. He opened his eyes, a faint smile of recognition and affection came over his features, and his feeble fingers strove to press those of Luis. The priest made a sign to the woman, and, whilst she gently raised Don Manuel's head, he held the cordial to his lips. The effect of the draught was instantaneous and reviving.

"This is a sad welcome for you, Luis," said Don Manuel. "Your home destroyed, your father dying. God be thanked for sending you now and no sooner! I can die happy, with you to close my eyes."

He paused, exhausted by the exertion of speaking. A slight red foam stood upon his lips; the priest wiped it away, and another draught of the cordial enabled him to proceed.

"My son," said he, "my minutes are numbered. Mark my last words, and attend to them as you value my blessing, and your own repose. I foresee that our country is on the

eve of a long and bloody struggle. How it may end, and whether it be the last that shall rend unhappy Spain, who can tell? But your course is plain before you. By the memory of your sainted mother, by the love you bear to me, be stanch to the cause I have ever defended. You are young, and strong, and brave; your arm and your heart's best blood are due to Spanish freedom. My son, swear that you will defend it!"

No selfish thought of his own happiness, marred by the oath he was required to take, or any but the one absorbing idea of smoothing his dying father's pillow by a prompt and willing compliance with his wishes, crossed the mind of Luis as he took the crucifix from the hand of the priest, and, kneeling by the bedside, swore on the sacred emblem to obey Don Manuel's injunctions in letter and in spirit, and to resist to his latest breath the traitors who would enslave his country. His father listened to the fervent vow with a well-pleased smile. By a last effort he raised himself in bed, and laid his hand upon the head of his kneeling son.

"May God and his saints prosper thee, Luis," he said, "as thou observest this oath!"

He sank back, his features convulsed by pain.

"Mother of God!" suddenly exclaimed the woman, who still held the bandage to the wound. The bleeding, which had nearly ceased, had recommenced with redoubled violence, and a crimson stream flowed over the bed. The death-rattle was in Don Manuel's throat, but his eyes were still riveted upon his son, and he made an effort to extend his arms towards him. With feelings of unutterable agony, Luis bent forward and kissed his father's cheek. It was that of a corpse.

For the space of a minute the bereaved son gazed at the rigid features before him, unable to comprehend that

one so dear was gone for ever. At last the sad truth forced itself upon his mind ; he bowed his face upon the pillow of his murdered parent, and his overcharged feelings found relief in a passion of tears. The priest and the woman left the apartment. Mariano Torres remained near his friend, and after a time made an effort to lead him from the room. But Luis motioned him away. His grief was of those that know not human consolation.

It was evening when Mariano, who had watched near the chamber of death, without venturing to intrude upon it, saw the door open and Luis come forth. Torres started at seeing him, so great was the change that had taken place in his aspect. His cheeks were pale and his eyes inflamed with weeping, but the expression of his countenance was no longer sorrowful, it was stern even to fierceness ; his look was that of an avenger rather than of a mourner. Taking Mariano's arm, he led him from the house, entered the stable, and saddled his horse with his own hands. Torres followed his example in silence, and then both mounted and rode off in the direction of the high-road. Upon reaching it, Mariano first ventured to address a question to his friend.

“ What are your plans, Luis ? ” said he. “ Whither do we proceed ? ”

“ To provide for my father's funeral,” was the reply.

“ And afterwards ? ” said his friend, with some hesitation.

“ To revenge his death ! ” hoarsely shouted Herrera, as he spurred his horse to its utmost speed along the rough and stony road.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

“ Por estas montañas,
Facciosos siguiendo,
Vamos defendiendo
La Constitucion.”

Himno de Navarra.

RARELY had the alameda of the picturesque old town of Logroño presented a gayer or more brilliant appearance than on a certain July evening of the year 1834. The day had been sultry in the extreme, and the sun touched the horizon before the fair Riojanas ventured to quit their artificially darkened rooms, and the cool shelter of their well-screened *miradores*, for the customary promenade. It was pleasant to linger in those sombre apartments, and beneath those thick awnings, which excluded each ray of sun, although they did not prevent what little breeze there was from circulating freely between the heavy stone balustrades and quaintly moulded iron-work of the spacious balconies, rustling the leaves and blossoms of the orange-trees, and wafting their fragrance to the languid beauties who sat dozing, chatting, or love-making within. But if the *farniente* and languor induced by the almost tropical heat, were so agreeable as to tempt to their longer indulgence, on the other hand the *paseo*, that indispensable termination to a Spaniard's day, had, upon the evening in question, peculiar attractions for the inhabitants of Logroño, and especially for their fairer portion. Within the preceding three days, a

body of troops, in number nearly twenty thousand men, a large portion of them the pick and flower of the Spanish army, had been concentrated at Logroño, whence, under the command of Rodil — a general of high reputation — they were to advance into Navarre, and exterminate the daring rebels, who, for months past, had disturbed the peace of Spain. During those three days all had been noise and movement in the town; every stable full of horses, every house crowded with soldiers; artillery and baggage-waggons encumbering the squares and suburbs; the streets resounding with the harsh clang of trumpets and monotonous beat of drums; muleteers loading and unloading their beasts; commissaries bustling after rations; be-plumed and embroidered staff-officers galloping to and fro with orders; the clash of arms and tramp of horses in the barrack-yard; the clatter of wine-cups, joyous song, and merry tinkle of the guitar, from the numerous wine-houses in which the light-hearted soldiery snatched a moment of enjoyment in the intervals of duty; — such were a few of the sights and sounds which for the time animated and gave importance to the usually quiet town of Logroño. Towards evening, the throng and bustle within the town diminished, and were transferred to the pleasant walks around it, especially to the shady and flower-bordered avenues of the alameda. Thither repaired the proud, graceful beauties of Castile and Navarre, their raven locks but partially veiled by the fascinating mantilla, their dark and lustrous eyes flashing coquettish glances upon the gay officers who accompanied or hovered around them. Every variety of uniform was there to be seen; all was blaze, and glitter, and brilliancy; the smart trappings of these fresh troops had not yet been tattered and tarnished amidst the hardships of mountain warfare. The showy hussar, the elegant lancer, the helmeted dragoon, aid-de-camps with their cocked-hats and blue

sashes, crossed and mingled in the crowd filling the alameda, at either end of which a band of music played the beautiful and spirit-stirring national airs of Spain. On the one hand arose the dingy masses of the houses of Logroño, speckled with the lights in their open casements, their outline distinctly defined against the rapidly darkening sky; on the other was a wide extent of corn-field, intersected and varied by rows and clusters of trees, amongst whose branches, and over the waving surface of the corn, innumerable fire-flies darted and sparkled. Here, a group of soldiers and country girls danced a bolero to the music of a guitar and tambourine; there, another party collected round an Andalusian ballad-singer, of whose patriotic ditties "*la Libertad*" and "*la inocente Isabel*" were the usual themes. In a third place, a few inveterate gamblers — as what Spanish soldiers are not? — had stretched themselves upon the grass in a circle, and by the flickering light of a broken lantern, or of a candle stuck in the earth, played a game at cards for their day's pay, or for any thing else they might chance to possess. On all sides, ragged, barefooted boys ran to and fro, carrying pieces of lighted rope in their hands, the end of which they occasionally dashed against the ground, causing a shower of sparks to fly out, whilst they recommended themselves to the custom of the cigar-smokers by loud cries of "*Fuego! Buen fuego! Quien quiere fuego?*"

At few of the young officers who, on the evening referred to, paraded the alameda of Logroño, was the artillery of eyes and fan more frequently levelled by the love-breathing beauties there assembled, than at Luis Herrera, who, in the uniform of the cavalry regiment to which he now belonged, was present upon the paseo. But for him fans waved and bright eyes sparkled in vain. He was deeply engaged in conversation with Mariano Torres, who, having recently obtained a commission in the same corps with his friend,

had arrived that evening to join it. The two young men had parted soon after the death of Don Manuel Herrera, and had not since met. One of Mariano's first questions concerned the Villabuenas.

"The Count went to France some months ago, I believe," replied Luis, dryly.

"Yes," said Torres, "so I heard, and took his daughter with him. But I thought it probable he might have returned in the train of his self-styled sovereign. He must be capable of any folly, since he was mad enough to sacrifice his fine fortune and position in the country by joining in this absurd rebellion. You of course know that he has been declared a traitor, and that his estates have been confiscated?"

Luis nodded assent.

"Well, in some respects the Count's losses may prove a gain to you," continued Torres, pursuing the train of his own thoughts, and not observing that the subject he had started was a painful one to his friend. "When we have put an end to the war, in a month or two at furthest, you can go to France, and obtain his consent to your marriage with his daughter. In the present state of his fortunes he will hardly refuse it; and you may then return to Spain, and make interest for your father-in-law's pardon."

"I am by no means certain," said Herrera, "that the war will be over so soon as you imagine. But you will oblige me, Mariano, by not speaking of this again. My engagement with Rita is long at an end, and not likely ever to be renewed. It was a dream, a vision of happiness not destined to be realised, and I endeavour to forget it. I myself put an end to it; and not under present circumstances, perhaps under none, should I think myself justified in seeking its renewal. Let us talk of something else — of the future if you will, but not of the past."

The hours passed by Luis beside Don Manuel's death-bed, had witnessed a violent revolution in his feelings and character. Devotedly attached to his father, who had been the sole friend, almost the only companion, of his boyhood, the fiercer passions of Herrera's nature were awakened into sudden and violent action by his untimely fate. A burning desire of revenge on the unscrupulous faction to which the persecution, exile, and cruel death of Don Manuel were to be attributed, took possession of him; and to gratify this desire, and at the same time to fulfil his solemn pledge to his dying parent, he felt himself at the moment capable of sacrificing even his love for Rita. No sooner was the mournful ceremony of the interment over, than he wrote to Villabuena, informing him, in few but stern words, how those who professed, like him, to be the defenders of religion and legitimacy, had enacted the part of assassins and incendiaries, and shed his father's blood upon his own threshold. This communication he considered to be, without further comment, a sufficient reply to the proposition made to him by the Count a few days previously. At the same time—and this was by far the most difficult part of his self-imposed task—he addressed a letter to Rita, releasing her from her engagement. He felt, he told her, that by so doing, he renounced his dearest hopes; but were he to act otherwise, and at once violate his oath, and forego his revenge, he should despise himself, and deserve her contempt. He implored her to forget their ill-fated attachment, for his own misery would be endurable only when he knew that he had not compromised her happiness.

Scarcely had Herrera despatched these letters, written under excitement amounting almost to frenzy, when, in pursuance of a previously formed plan, and as if to stifle regrets which a forced and painful determination occasioned him, he hastened to join as a volunteer the nearest

Christino column. It was one commanded by General Lorenzo, then operating against Santos Ladron and the Navarrese Carlists. In several skirmishes Herrera signalled himself by the intrepidity and fury with which he fought. Ladron was taken and shot, and Lorenzo marched to form the advanced guard of a strong division which, under the command of Sarsfield, rapidly neared the scene of the insurrection. On the mere approach of the Christino army, the battalions of Castilian Realistas, which formed, numerically speaking, an important part of the forces then under arms for Don Carlos, disbanded themselves and fled to their homes. Sarsfield continued his movement northwards, took possession, after trifling resistance, of Logroño, Vittoria, Bilboa, and other towns occupied by the Carlists; and succeeded, after a few insignificant skirmishes, in dispersing and disarming the whole of the insurgents in the three Basque provinces. A handful of badly armed and undisciplined Navarrese peasants were all that now kept the field for Charles V., and of the rapid capture or destruction of these, the sanguine Christinos entertained no doubt. The principal strength of the Carlists was broken; their arms were taken away; the majority of the officers who had joined, and of the men of note and influence in the country who had declared for them, had been compelled to cross the Pyrenees. But the tenacious courage and hardihood of the Navarrese insurgents, and the military skill of their commander, baffled the unceasing pursuit kept up by the Queen's generals. During the whole winter, the Carlists lived like wolves in the mountains, surrounded by ice and snow, cheerfully supporting incredible hardships and privations. Nay, even under such disadvantages, their numbers increased, and their discipline improved; and

when the spring came they presented the appearance, not of a band of robbers, as their opponents had hitherto designated them, but of a body of regular troops, hardy and well organised, devoted to their general, and enthusiastic for the cause they defended. Their rapid movements, their bravery and success in several well-contested skirmishes, some of which almost deserved the name of regular actions, the surprise of various Christino posts and convoys, the consistency, in short, which the war took, seriously alarmed the Queen's government; and the formidable preparations made for a campaign against the Carlists, were a tacit acknowledgment that Spain was in a state of civil war.

In the wild and beautiful valley of the Lower Amezcoa, in the *merindad* or district of Estella, a large body of Christino troops was assembled on the fifteenth day after Rodil's entrance into Navarre. The numerous forces which that general found under his command, after uniting the troops he had brought with him with those already in the province, had enabled him to adopt a system of occupation, the most effectual, it was believed, for putting an end to the war. In pursuance of this plan, he established military lines of communication between the different towns of Navarre and Alava, garrisoned and fortified the principal villages, and having in this manner disseminated a considerable portion of his army through the insurgent districts, he commenced, with a column of ten thousand men, a movement through the mountainous regions, whither, upon his approach, the Carlists had retired. His object was the double one of attacking and destroying their army, and of seizing the person of Don Carlos, who had just arrived in Spain. The heat of the weather was remarkable, even for that usually sultry season; the troops had had a long and fatiguing march over the rugged sierra of Urbasa; and

Rodil, either wishing to give them rest, or with some intention of garrisoning the villages scattered about the valley, which had hitherto been a chief haunt of the Carlists, had come to a halt in the Lower Amezcoa.

It was two in the afternoon, and, notwithstanding the presence of so large a body of men, all was stillness and repose in the valley. The troops had arrived that morning; and, after taking up their cantonments in the various villages and hamlets, had sought refuge from the overpowering heat. In the houses, whose shutters were carefully closed to exclude the importunate sunbeams, in barns and stables, under the shadow cast by balconies or projecting eaves, and along the banks of the stream which traverses the valley, and is noted in the surrounding country for the crystal clearness and extreme coldness of its waters, the soldiers lay, their uniforms unbuttoned, the stiff leathern stock thrown aside, enjoying the mid-day slumber which the temperature and their recent fatigue rendered doubly acceptable. Here and there, at a short distance from the villages, and further off, near the different roads and passes that give access to the valley through or over the gigantic mountain-wall encircling it, the sun flashed upon the polished bayonets and musket-barrels of the pickets. The men lay beside their piled arms, or had crept under bushes to indulge in the universal *siesta*; even the sentries seemed almost to sleep as they paced lazily up and down, or leaned upon their muskets, keeping but a drowsy watch and careless look-out for an enemy whose proximity was neither to be anticipated nor dreaded by a force so superior to any he could get together.

Such was the scene that presented itself to one who, having approached the valley from the south, and ascended the mountains bounding it on that side, now contemplated from their summit the inactivity of its occupants. He was

a man of the middle height, but appearing rather shorter from a slight stoop in the shoulders; his age was between forty and fifty years; his aspect grave and thoughtful. His features were regular; his eyes clear and penetrating; a strong dark mustache covered his upper lip, and joined his whisker, which extended but little below the ear. His dress consisted of a plain blue frock, girt at the waist by a belt of black leather, supporting a sabre; and his head was covered with a *boina*, or flat cap, of the description commonly worn in the neighbourhood of the Pyrenees, woven in one piece out of fine scarlet wool, and decorated with a *borla*, or tassel of gold cord, spreading like a star over the crown of the head. In his hand he held a telescope, which he rested on the top of a fragment of rock, and through it attentively noted what passed in the valley below. The case of the field-glass was slung across his body by a strap, and, upon inspection, a name would have been found stamped upon its leathern surface. It was that of Tomas Zumalacarregui.

A short distance in rear of the Carlist leader, so posted as not to be visible from the valley, stood a little group of officers, and persons in civilian garb, and a few orderlies, one of whom held the General's horse. Behind these, a battalion of infantry was drawn up — fine, muscular, active fellows, inured to every hardship, and as indifferent to the scorching heat to which they were now exposed, as they had been to the bitter cold in the mountains where they had passed the preceding winter. Their appearance was not very uniform in its details; short jackets, loose trousers, and sandals, composed the dress of most of them — one well adapted to long marches and active movements; and they all wore caps similar to those of the officers, but of a blue colour, and coarser material. A second battalion of these hardy guerillas, advanced with light and elastic step

up the rugged and difficult path, and was followed by two others, which, as fast as they arrived, were formed up by their officers in the best manner the uneven ground would admit. Half a dozen mules, laden with ammunition, brought up the rear. When the four battalions, consisting together of nearly three thousand men, had assembled on the summit of the mountain, arms were piled, and the soldiers were allowed to sit down or repose themselves as they chose from the fatigues of their long and wearisome ascent, and of a march that had lasted from early dawn.

The mountain upon which these troops were now stationed was less precipitous upon its inner side than most of those surrounding the valley. It shelved gradually downwards, broken here and there by ravines, its partially wooded slopes forming a succession of terraces, extending right and left for a distance of more than a mile. At the foot of these slopes, and immediately below the spot occupied by the Carlists, a low hill ran off at right angles from the higher range, projecting into the valley as a promontory does into the sea. Excepting the side furthest from the mountains, which consisted of pasture land, the base and skirts of this hill were covered with oak and chestnut, and upon the clearing on its summit stood a shepherd's hut, whence was commanded a view of a considerable extent of the face of the sierra, as well as of the entrance of a neighbouring pass that led out of the valley in the direction of Estella. At this hut a Christino picket was stationed, and to it, when the Carlist chief had completed his general survey of the valley, his attention became particularly directed. The outpost consisted of about thirty men, little, brown-complexioned, monkey-faced recruits from the southern provinces, who, sunk in fancied security, and in the indolence natural to them, neglected their duty to an extent that

might seriously have compromised the safety of the Christino army, had it depended upon their vigilance. The majority lay asleep in and around the picket-house, which was situated on one side of the platform, within fifty yards of the trees. Of the three sentinels, one had seated himself on a stone, his musket between his knees, and, having unbuttoned the loose grey coat that hung like a sack about his wizened carcass, was busily engaged in seeking, between shirt and skin, certain companions whom he had perhaps picked up in his quarters of the previous night, and by whose presence about his person he seemed to be but moderately gratified. Another sentry had wandered away from the post assigned to him, and approached his remaining comrade with the charitable object of dividing with him a small quantity of tobacco, which the two now deliberately manufactured into paper cigars, beguiling the time by sundry guard-room jokes and witticisms.

An almost imperceptible smile of contempt curled the lip of Zumalacarregui as he observed the unmilitary negligence apparent in this advanced post of the Christinos. It was exchanged for a proud and well-pleased glance when he turned round and saw his gallant Navarrese awaiting in eager suspense a signal to advance upon the enemy, whom they knew to be close at hand. Zumalacarregui stepped up to the nearest battalion. Starting, on his approach, from their sitting and reclining postures, the men stood ready to seize their muskets, and fall into their places. Their chief nodded approbation of their alacrity, but intimated to them, by a motion of his hand, that the time for action was not yet come.

“*Paciencia, muchachos!*” said he. “Patience, you have not long to wait. Refresh yourselves, men, whilst time is given you. Captain Landa!” cried he, raising his voice.

The officer commanding the light company of the battalion stepped forward, and, halting at a short distance from his General, stood motionless, with hand to cap, awaiting orders.

"Come with me, Landa," said Zumalacarregui. He took the officer's arm, led him to the spot whence he had observed the valley, and pointed to the Christino picket.

"Take your company," said he, "and fetch me those sleepy fellows here; without a shot, if possible."

The officer returned to his men, formed them up with all speed, and marched them off at a rapid pace. When they had disappeared amongst the rocks, Zumalacarregui turned to the chief of his staff.

"Colonel Gomez," said he, "take the third and fourth battalions, and move them half a mile to our left, keeping well out of sight. We are not strong enough to attack in the plain, but we shall perhaps get our friends to meet us in the mountain."

Gomez—a tall, portly man, of inexpressive countenance, and whose accent betrayed the Andalusian—proceeded to execute the orders he had received, whilst Zumalacarregui resumed his post of observation.

The carelessness of the Christino picket, and the practice which the Carlists had already had in a warfare of stratagem and surprise, enabled the company of light infantry to execute, with great facility, the instructions they had received. The young ensign who commanded the outpost was sauntering listlessly along the edge of the wood, cursing the wearisome duty intrusted to him, and referring to his watch to see how soon he might expect relief, when he was suddenly brought to the ground by a blow from a musket-but. Before he could rise, the point of a bayonet was at his throat. At the same instant, threescore long-legged

Navarrese dashed from under cover of the wood, bayoneted the sentinels, surrounded the picket-house, and made prisoners of the picket. The surprise was complete ; not a shot was fired, and all occurred with so little noise that it appeared probable the *coup-de-main* would only become known to the Christinos when the time arrived for relieving the outposts.

A trifling oversight, however, on the part of the Carlists, caused things to pass differently. A soldier belonging to the picket, and who lay asleep in the long grass, just within the wood, had escaped all notice. The noise of the scuffle awoke him ; but perceiving how matters stood, he prudently remained in his hiding-place till the Carlists, having collected the arms and ammunition of their prisoners, began to ascend the mountain. At a distance of three hundred yards he fired at them, and then scampered off in the contrary direction. His bullet took no effect, and the retreating guerillas allowed him to escape unpursued. But the report of his musket spread the alarm. The pickets right and left of the one that had been surprised, saw the Carlists winding their way up the mountain ; the vedettes fired, and the drums beat to arms. The alarm spread rapidly from one end of the valley to the other, and in an instant every part of it swarmed with men. Dragoons saddled and artillery harnessed ; infantry formed up by battalions and brigades ; generals and aides-de-camp galloped to and fro hurrying the movements of the troops, and asking the whereabouts of the enemy. This information they soon obtained. No sooner was the alarm given, than Zumalacarregrui, relying upon the tried courage of his soldiers, and on the advantage of his position, which must render the enemy's cavalry useless, and greatly diminish the effect of the artillery, put himself at the head of his two battalions,

and rapidly descended the mountain, despatching an officer after Gomez with orders for a similar movement on his part. Before the Carlists reached the plain, the Christinos advanced to meet them, and a smart skirmish began.

Distributed along the cliffs and terraces of the mountain, kneeling amongst bushes and sheltered behind trees, the Carlists kept up a steady fire, warmly replied to by their antagonists. In the most exposed situations, the Carlist officers of all ranks, from the ensign to the general, showed themselves, encouraging their men, urging them to take good aim, and not to fire till they could distinguish the faces of their enemies, themselves sometimes taking up a dead man's musket and sending a few well-directed shots amongst the Christinos. Here a man was seen to bind the sash, which forms part of the dress of every Navarrese peasant, over a wound that was not of sufficient importance to send him to the rear; in another place a guerilla replenished his scanty stock of ammunition from the cartridge-belt of a fallen comrade, and sprang forward, to meet perhaps, the next moment, a similar fate. On the side of the Christinos there was less appearance of enthusiasm and ardour for the fight; but their numbers were far superior, and each moment increased, and some light guns and howitzers that had been brought up began to scatter shot and shell amongst the Carlists, although the manner in which the latter were sheltered amongst wood and rock, prevented the missiles from doing them very material injury. The fight was hottest around the hill on which the picket had been stationed, now the most advanced point of the Carlist line. Here a battalion, dispersed amongst the trees that fringed its sides, opposed a fierce resistance to the assaults of the Christinos. At last the latter, weary of the protracted skirmishing, by which they lost many men, but obtained no material advantage, sent

forward two grenadier battalions to take the hill at the point of the bayonet. With their bugles playing a lively march, these troops, some of the finest infantry in the Spanish army, advanced in admirable order, and without firing a shot, to perform the duty assigned them. On their approach the Carlists retreated from the sides of the hill, and assembled in the wood on its summit, at the foot of the higher mountains. One battalion of the assailants ascended the hill in line, and advanced along the open ground, whilst the other marched round the skirt of the eminence to take the Carlists in flank. The Navarrese reserved their fire till they saw the former battalion within fifty yards, and then poured in a deadly volley. The ranks of the Christinos were thinned, but they closed them again, and, with levelled bayonets and quickened step, advanced to clear the wood, little expecting that the newly raised troops opposed to them would venture to come to close quarters. The event proved that they had undervalued their antagonists. Emerging from their shelter, the Carlists brought their bayonets to the charge, and, with a ringing shout of "*Viva Carlos Quinto!*" rushed upon their foe. A griding clash of steel and a shrill cry of agony bore witness to the fury of the encounter. The loss on both sides was severe, but the advantage remained with the Carlists. The grenadiers, unprepared for so obstinate a resistance, were borne back several paces, and thrown into confusion. But the victors had no time to follow up their advantage, for the other Christino battalion had entered the wood, and advanced rapidly upon their flank. Hastily collecting their wounded, the Carlists retired, still fighting, to the higher ground in their rear. At the same moment Zumalacarregui, observing a body of fresh troops making a movement upon his right, as if with the intention of outflanking him, ordered the retreat to be sounded, and the Carlist line re-

tired slowly up the mountains. Some of Rodil's regiments followed, and the skirmishing was kept up with more or less spirit till night put an end to it.

From the commencement of the fight, several squadrons of the Queen's cavalry had remained drawn up near a village in which they had their quarters, at about a mile from the Carlist left. A short distance in front of the line, a number of officers had collected together, and observed the progress of the combat, in which the impracticability of the ground for horsemen prevented their taking a share. There was considerable grumbling, especially amongst the juniors, at the inactivity to which they were condemned.

"If this is the kind of fighting we are to have," said a testy young cornet, "they might as well have left us in our garrisons. We were a deuced deal more comfortable, and quite as useful, in our snug quarters at Valladolid. The faction have no cavalry, and you will not catch their infernal guerillas coming down into the plain to be sabred at leisure."

"No," said another subaltern, "but they are forming cavalry, it is said. Besides, we may catch their infantry napping some day, as they did our picket just now."

"Pshaw!" replied the first speaker. "Before then every horse in the brigade will be lame or sore-backed, and we ourselves shall be converted into infantry. All respect for lance and sabre—but curse me if I would not turn foot-soldier at once, rather than crawl over these mountains as we have done for the last fortnight, dragging our horses after us. For six hours yesterday did I flounder over ground that was never meant to be trod by any but bears or izards, breaking my spurs and shins, whilst my poor nag rubbed the skin off his legs against rocks and tree-stumps. When I entered the cavalry I expected my

horse to carry me ; if this goes on, it is more likely I shall have to carry him."

"Nice fellows you are," said an old grey-mustached captain, "grumbling before you are a month in the field. Wait a bit, my boys, till your own flesh and your horses' have been taken down by hard marching and short commons, and you are obliged to hold on by the mane when you mount a hill, lest the saddle should slip back over your charger's lean ribs. The marches you have had are child's play to what you *will* have before the campaign is over."

"Then curse me if I don't join the footpads," returned the dissatisfied cornet. "At any rate, one would have fighting then—a chance of a broken head or t'other epaulet; and that's better than carrying a sabre one never draws. Why, the very mules can't keep their footing amongst these mountains. Ask our quarter-master; he'll tell you something about it. I saw him yesterday craning over the edge of a precipice, and watching two of his beasts of burden going down hill a deal quicker than they came up—their legs in the air, and the sacks of corn upon their backs hastening their descent to some ravine or other, where the crows no doubt are now picking their bones. You should have heard old Skinflint swear. I thought he'd have thrown the muleteer after the mules. And they call this a country for cavalry!"

"I certainly fear," said Herrera, who had listened to the colloquy, "that as long as the war is confined to these provinces, cavalry will not be often wanted."

"And if they were not here, they would be wanted immediately," said a field-officer who was watching the skirmish through a telescope. "Besides, you young gentlemen have less cause for discontent than any body else. There may be no opportunity for brilliant charges,

but there is always work for a subaltern's party, in the way of cutting off pickets or some such fun. I see a group of fellows yonder who will get themselves into trouble if they do not take care."

All eyes and glasses turned in the direction indicated by the major. It was the hottest moment of the fight; by their impetuosity and courage the Carlists kept at bay the superior numbers of their antagonists; and on their extreme left, a small party of horsemen, consisting of four or five officers and a dozen lancers, had ventured to advance a short distance into the plain. They had halted at the edge of a *manzanal*, or cider orchard, some way in advance of their own line, but at a considerable distance from any Christino troops; whilst a tolerably good path, up the least precipitous part of the mountain, seemed to ensure them an easy retreat whenever necessary. So confident were they of their safety, that the officers dismounted, and scrutinized the Christino reserves, and the various bodies of infantry advancing from the more distant cantonments. At this moment the general commanding the cavalry rode up to Herrera and his comrades.

"Major Gonzalez," said he, "send half a troop to cut off those reconnoitering gentry. Let the party file off to the rear, or their intention will be perceived."

The subalterns belonging to the squadron under command of Gonzalez, pressed round him, eager to be chosen for the duty that was to vary the monotony and inaction of which they had so recently complained.

"Herrera," said the major, "you have most practice in this sort of thing. Take thirty men, march them back into the village, out on the other side, and round that rising ground upon our right. There is plenty of cover, and if you avail of it, the game cannot escape. And a hint to you—your fellows generally grind their sabres pretty

sharp, I know, and you are not apt to encumber yourself with prisoners ; but yonder party, judging from their appearance, are men of note amongst the rebels, worth more alive than dead. Bring them in with whole skins. As to the fellows with the red and white lance-flags, I leave them entirely at your discretion."

"I shall observe your orders, major," replied Herrera, whose eyes sparkled at the prospect of action. "Sergeant Velasquez, tell off thirty men from the left of the troop."

The non-commissioned officer, who was introduced to the reader at the commencement of this narrative, and who now found himself, in consequence of a change of regiment, in Herrera's squadron, obeyed the order, and the party marched leisurely into the village. No sooner, however, were they in the narrow street, concealed from the view of those whom they intended to surprise, than their pace was, altered to a brisk trot, which became a hand-gallop when they got into the fields behind the rising ground referred to by the major. They then struck into a hollow road, sheltered by bush-crowned banks, and soon reached the long narrow strip of apple-orchard, at the further angle of which the group of Carlists was posted. Skirting the plantation on the reverse side to the enemy, and then wheeling to the left, they cantered on in line, their sabre scabbards hooked up to their belts to diminish the clatter, the noise of their horses' feet inaudible upon the grass and fern over which they rode. "Charge!" shouted Herrera, as they reached the corner of the orchard : and with a loud hurra and brandished sabres, the dragoons dashed down upon the little party of Carlists, now within a hundred paces of them. The dismounted officers hurried to their horses, and the lancers hastily faced about to resist the attack ; but before they completed the movement, they were sabred and ridden over. Herrera was not unmindful

of his orders to protect the officers from a similar fate. One of the latter, who had his back turned to him, and who, although he wore a sword, was dressed in plain clothes, was in the act of getting into the saddle, when a dragoon aimed a furious cut at his head. Herrera parried the blow, and as he did so, a movement of the person whose life he had saved, disclosed the well-known features of the Conde de Villabuena.

"Señor Conde!" exclaimed the astonished Luis, "I am grieved ——"

"It is unnecessary, sir," said the Count, coldly. "You obey orders, I presume, and do what you consider your duty. Am I to be shot here, or taken to your chief?"

"It is much against my will," answered Herrera, "that I constrain you at all. I am compelled to conduct you to General Rodil."

The Count made no reply, but, turning his horse's head, rode moodily onwards, followed, rather than accompanied, by his captor. A Carlist officer and three members of the rebel junta were the other prisoners. The lancers had been cut to pieces.

The position in which Herrera found himself was in the highest degree embarrassing and painful. Old affection and friendship were revived by the sight of the Count; and, had he obeyed his first impulse, he would frankly have expressed his sorrow at the chance which had thrown Villabuena into the hands of his foes, and have said what he could to console him under his misfortune. But the Count's manner was so haughty and repulsive, and so studiously did he avoid recognising in Luis any thing but an opponent and a captor, that the kind word froze upon the young man's tongue, and, during the few minutes necessary to rejoin the regiment, silence remained un-

broken. On reaching the spot where the cavalry was still halted, the detachment was received with loud congratulations on the successful issue of the expedition.

"Cleverly managed, Señor Herrera!" said the colonel; "and the prisoners are of importance. Take them yourself to the General."

In obedience to this order, Herrera proceeded to the part of the field where Rodil, with a numerous and brilliant staff, had taken his post.

"Ha!" said the General, when the young officer had made his report, his quick eye glancing at the prisoners, some of whom were known to him by sight. "Ha! you have done well, sir, your conduct shall be favourably reported at Madrid. The Marquis of Torralva and Count Villabuena—an important capture this. Your name, sir, and yours, and yours?" said he sharply to the other prisoners.

The answers visibly increased his satisfaction. They were all men well known as zealous and influential partisans of the Pretender. There was a moment's pause. Rodil turned to an aid-de-camp.

"A priest and a firing party," said he. "Half an hour to prepare for death," he added, addressing the prisoners. "Rebels taken with arms in their hands can expect no greater favour."

A cold chill came over Herrera when he heard this order for the instant execution of his former friend and benefactor. Forgetting, in the agitation of the moment, his own subordinate position, and the impropriety of his interference, he was about to address the General, and petition for Villabuena's life, when he was saved from a breach of discipline by the interposition of a third party. A young man in general's uniform, of sallow complexion

and handsome countenance, who was stationed upon Rodil's right hand, moved his horse nearer to that of his chief, and spoke a few words in a low tone. Rodil listened with attention, and reflected a moment before replying.

"You are right, Cordova," said he; "they may be worth keeping as hostages. I will delay their death till I can communicate with her Majesty's government. Let them be strictly guarded, and sent to-morrow to Pampeluna under good escort. Your name, sir?" said he, turning to Herrera.

Herrera told his name and regiment.

"Luis Herrera," repeated Rodil; "I have heard it before, as that of a brave and promising officer. Well, sir, since you have taken the prisoners, you shall keep them. Yourself and a detachment of your squadron will form part of their escort to Pampeluna."

The flattering words of his General went but a short way towards reconciling Luis to the unpleasant task of escorting his former friend to a captivity which in all probability would terminate in a violent death. With a heavy heart he saw Villabuena and the other prisoners led away to the house that was to serve as their place of confinement for the night; and still more painful were his feelings, when he thought of Rita's grief on receiving intelligence of her father's peril, perhaps of his execution. To alleviate to the utmost of his power the present position of the Count, he recommended him to the care of the officer on guard over him, who promised to allow his prisoner every indulgence consistent with his safe keeping. And although the escort duty assigned to him was in some respects so unpleasant to fulfil, Herrera's repugnance disappeared before the reflection, that he might spare Villabuena much of the hardship and rough treatment to which his captivity exposed him.

The first grey light of morning had scarcely appeared in

the Lower Amezcoa, stealing over the mountain-tops, and indistinctly shadowing forth the objects in the plain, when the stillness that had reigned in the valley since the conclusion of the preceding day's skirmish, was broken by the loud and joyous clang of the reveillé. At various points of the Christino cantonments, the brazen instruments of the cavalry, and the more numerous, but perhaps less martially sounding, bands of the infantry regiments, roused the drowsy soldiers from their slumbers, and awakened the surrounding echoes by the wild melody of Riego's hymn. Gradually the sky grew brighter, the last lingering stars disappeared, the summits of the western mountains were illumined with a golden flush, and the banks and billows of white mist that rested on the meadows, and hung upon the hill-sides, melted and disappeared at the approach of the sun's rays. In the fields and on the roads near the different villages, the troops assembled, the men silent and heavy-eyed, but refreshed and invigorated by the night's repose, the horses champing their bits, and neighing with impatience. Trains of mules, laden with sacks of corn and rations, which from their weight might be deemed sufficient load for as many dromedaries, issued from barn and stable, expending their superfluous strength and spirit by viciously kicking and biting at each other, and were ranged in rear of the troops, where also carts and litters, containing wounded men, awaited the order for departure. The serjeant-majors called the roll of their troops and companies; whilst the men, leaning upon their muskets, or sitting at ease in their saddles, munched fragments of the brown ration bread, smoked the cigarette, and received from the hands of tawny-visaged sutlers an antidote to the cool morning air, in the shape of a glass of *aguardiente*. When all preparations were completed, and the time necessary for the formation

of so numerous a body of men had elapsed, the order to march was given, and the troops moved off in a southerly direction.

Whilst this general move occurred, a detachment, consisting of four companies of infantry, and fifty dragoons, separated itself from the main body, and took the road to Pampeluna, whither it was to escort Count Villabuena and his fellow-captives. The country to the north-east of the Amezcoa, through which they had to pass, was believed to be free from Carlists, with the exception of unimportant parties of armed peasants; Rodil himself had gone in pursuit of Zumalacarregui, who had retired in the same direction whence he had approached the valley; and therefore this slight escort was deemed amply sufficient to convey the prisoners in safety to their destination, whither one long day's march would take them. The detachment was commanded by a major of infantry—a young man who had acquired what military experience he possessed in the ease and sloth of a garrison life, during which, however, thanks to certain influential recommendations, he had found promotion come so quickly, that he had not the same reason with many of his comrades to be satisfied with the more active and dangerous service to which he had recently been called. Inwardly congratulating himself on the change which his present duty ensured him from the hardships of bivouacs and bad quarters to at least a day or two's enjoyment of the flesh-pots of Pampeluna, he rode gaily along at the head of the escort, chatting and laughing with his second in command. Behind him came Herrera and his dragoons, and in rear of them the prisoners, on either side of whom marched foot-soldiers with fixed bayonets. The body of infantry brought up the rear. Strict orders had been given against conversing with the captives; and Herrera was compelled, therefore, to abandon his intention of endea-

vouring to break down the barrier of cold reserve with which Count Villabuena had fenced himself in, and of offering such assistance and comfort as it was in his power to give. He was forced to content himself with keeping near the prisoners, to protect them from any abuse or ill-treatment on the part of the soldiery.

For some hours no incident or novelty varied the monotony of the march. There was no high-road in the direction the escort took ; the way, which was shown by a peasant, led through country lanes, over hills, and across fields, as nearly in a straight line as the rugged and mountainous country would allow. Towards noon, the heat, endurable enough during the first hours of the morning, became excessive. The musket barrels and sabre scabbards almost burned the fingers that touched them ; the coats of the horses were caked with sweat and dust ; and the men panted along, looking out eagerly, but in vain, for some roadside fountain or streamlet, at which to quench their thirst and refresh their parched mouths. They had reached a beaten road, which, although rough and neglected, yet afforded a better footing than they had hitherto had, when such means of refreshment at last presented themselves. It was near the entrance of a defile formed by two irregular lines of low hills, closing in the road, which was bordered with patches of trees and brushwood, and with huge masses of rock that seemed placed there by the hands of the Titans, or to have rolled thither, during some mighty convulsion of nature, from the distant ranges of mountains. At a short distance from this pass, there bubbled forth from under a moss-grown block of granite a clear and sparkling rivulet, which, overflowing the margin of the basin it had formed, rippled across the road, and entered the opposite fields. Here a five minutes' halt was called, the men were allowed to quit their ranks, and in an instant they were kneeling by

scores along the side of the little stream, collecting the water in canteens and foraging-caps, and washing their hands and faces in the pure element. The much-needed refreshment taken, the march was resumed.

Notwithstanding that the pass through which the prisoners and their escort now advanced was nearly a mile in length, and in many places admirably adapted for a surprise, the officer in command, either through ignorance or over-confidence, neglected the usual precaution of sending scouts along the hills that on either side commanded the road. This negligence struck Herrera, who knew by experience, that, with such active and wily foes as the Carlists, no precaution could be dispensed with, however superfluous it might seem. Scarcely had the troops entered the defile when he suggested to the major the propriety of sending out skirmishers to beat the thickets and guard against an ambuscade.

"Quite unnecessary, sir," was the reply. "There is no rebel force in this part of the country that would dare to come within a league of us."

"So we are told," said Herrera; "but I have had occasion to see that one must not always rely on such assurances."

"I shall do so, nevertheless, in this instance," said the major. "We have a long march before us, and if I fag the men by sending them clambering over hills and rocks, I shall lose half of them by straggling, and perhaps not reach Pampeluna to-night."

"If you will allow me," said Herrera, "I will send a few of my dragoons to do the duty. They will hardly be so effective as infantry for such a service, but it will be better than leaving our flanks entirely unguarded."

"I have already told you, sir," replied the major angrily, "that I consider such precaution overstrained and unneces-

sary. I believe, Lieutenant Herrera, that it is I who command this detachment."

Thus rebuked, Herrera ceased his remonstrances, and fell back into his place. The march continued in all security through the wild and dangerous defile; the men, refreshed by their momentary halt, tramping briskly along, chattering, smoking, and singing snatches of soldiers' songs. It seemed as if the negligence of the major was likely to be justified, as far as it could be, by the result; for they were now within two hundred yards of the extremity of the pass, and in view of the open country. The defile each moment widened, the space between the road and the hills being filled up with a wood of young beech and oak. Herrera himself, who had each moment expected to receive a volley from some ambushed foe, thought the danger over, when a man dressed in red uniform, with a scarlet cap upon his head, and mounted on a white horse, suddenly appeared at the end of the pass, and tossing his lance, which he carried at the trail, into his bridle hand, put a trumpet to his mouth, and blew a loud and startling blast. The signal, for such it was, was promptly answered. A hoarse wild shout issued from the wood on either side the road, and a volley of musketry resounded through the pass. In an instant the hills were alive with Carlist soldiers, reloading the muskets they had just fired, taking aim at the Christinos, or fixing their bayonets in preparation for a closer encounter. Another minute had scarcely elapsed, when a strong squadron of cavalry, which the trumpeter had preceded, dashed out of the fields at the extremity of the pass, formed column upon the road, and levelling their long light lances, advanced, led on by Zumalacarregui himself, to charge the astonished Christinos.

Extreme was the confusion into which the escort was thrown by this attack, so totally unexpected by every body

but Herrera. All was bewilderment and terror; the men stared at each other, or at their dead and wounded comrades, and forgot to defend themselves. This state of stupefaction lasted, however, but a second; and then the soldiers, waiting no orders, turned back to back, and facing the Carlists, returned their fire with all the vigour and promptness which desperation could give. The major—a really brave man, but quite unequal to an emergency of this nature—knew not what orders to give, or how to extricate himself and his men from the scrape into which his headstrong imprudence had brought them. Foreseeing no possibility of escape from an enemy who, in numbers and advantage of position, so far overmatched him, his next thought regarded the prisoners, and he galloped back to where they stood. Doubtless the Carlists had received orders concerning them; for neither they nor their immediate escort had suffered injury from the volley that had played such havoc with the main body of the detachment.

“Fire on the prisoners!” shouted the major.

The guard round Villabuena and his fellow-captives stared at their officer without obeying. Some of them were reloading, and the others did not comprehend the strange order.

“Fire, I say!” repeated the commandant. “By the Holy Cross! if we must leave our bones here, theirs shall whiten beside them.”

More than one musket was turned in the direction of the doomed captives, when Herrera, who, at the moment of leading his dragoons to the encounter of the Carlist cavalry, just then appearing on the road, had overheard the furious exclamation of his superior, galloped back to the rescue.

“Stop!” shouted he, striking up the muzzles of the muskets. “You have no warrant for such cruelty.”

"Traitor!" screamed the major, breathless with rage, and raising his sword to make a cut at Herrera. But before he could strike, his eyes rolled frightfully, his feet left the stirrups, and, dropping his weapon, he fell headlong into the dust. A Carlist bullet had pierced his heart.

"Fire at your foes, and not at defenceless prisoners," said Herrera sternly to the dismayed soldiers. "Your lives shall answer for those of these men."

And again placing himself at the head of the cavalry, he led them to meet Zumalacarregui and his lancers.

But the few seconds employed in saving Villabuena and his companions, had made all the difference in the chances of success. Could Herrera have charged, as he had been about to do, before the Carlists formed up and advanced, he might, very possibly, owing to the greater skill of his men in the use of their weapons, and to the superiority of their horses, have broken and sabred his opponents, and opened the road for the Christino infantry. Once in the plain, where the dragoons could act with advantage, the Carlists might have been kept at bay, and a retreat effected. Now the state of affairs was very different. The lancers, with Zumalacarregui and several of his staff charging at their head like mere subalterns, thundered along the road, and before Herrera could get his dragoons into full career, the shock took place. In an instant the way was blocked with a confused mass of men and horses. The rear files of the contending cavalry, unable immediately to check their speed, pushed forward those in front, or forced them off the road upon the strip of broken ground and brushwood on either side; friends and foes were mingled, cutting, thrusting, swearing, and shouting. But the dragoons, besides encountering the lances of the horsemen, suffered terribly from the fire of the foot-soldiers, who came down to

the side of the road, blazing at them from within a few paces, and even thrusting them off their horses with the bayonet. In so confused a struggle, and against such odds, the superior discipline and skill of the Christinos were of small avail. Herrera, who, at the first moment of the encounter, had crossed swords with Zumalacarregui himself, but who the next instant had been separated from him by the *mêlée*, fought like a lion, till his right arm was disabled by a lance-thrust. The soldier who had wounded him was about to repeat the blow, when a Carlist officer interfered. Herrera was made prisoner, and his men, discouraged by his loss, and reduced to little more than a third of their original numbers, threw down their arms and asked for quarter. Their example was immediately followed by those of the infantry who had escaped alive from their opponents' murderous volleys.

Of all who took part in this bloody conflict, not one bore himself more gallantly, or did more execution amongst the enemy, than our old acquaintance, Sergeant Velasquez. When the charge had taken place, and the desperate fight above described commenced, he backed his horse off the narrow road upon which the combatants were cooped up, into a nook formed by a bank and some trees. In this advantageous position, his rear and flank protected, he kept off all who attacked him, replying with laugh and jeer to the furious oaths and imprecations of his baffled antagonists. His fierce and determined aspect, and still more the long and powerful sweep of his broad sabre, struck terror into his assailants, who found their best aimed blows and most furious assaults repelled, and returned with fatal effect, by the practised arm of the dragoon. At the moment that Herrera was wounded, and the fight brought to a close, the mass of combatants pressed further forward into the

defile, and only three or four of the rearmost of the Carlists occupied the portion of the pass between Velasquez and the open country. Just then a shout in his rear, and a bullet through his shako, warned the sergeant that the infantry were upon him ; and at the same moment he saw his comrades desist from their defence. Setting spurs to his charger, he made the animal bound forward upon the road, clove the shoulder of the nearest lancer, rode over another, and passing unhurt through the rain of bullets that whistled around him, galloped out of the defile.

Unwounded, Velasquez was not unpursued. A dozen lancers spurred their horses after him ; and although most of them, seeing that they had no chance of overtaking the well-mounted fugitive, soon pulled up and retraced their steps, three or four persevered in the chase. Fortunate was it for the sergeant that the good horse which he had lost at the venta near Tudela, had been replaced by one of equal speed and mettle. With unabated swiftness he scoured along the road through the whirlwind of dust raised by his charger's feet, until the Carlists, seeing the distance between them and the object of their pursuit rapidly increase, gradually abandoned the race. One man alone continued stanch, and seemed likely to win the race. This was no other than the sergeant's former opponent in the ball-court, Paco the muleteer, now converted into a Carlist lancer, and who, his sharp-rowelled spurs goading his horse's sides, his lance in his hand, his body bent forward as though he would have outstripped in his eagerness the speed of the animal he bestrode, dashed onward with headlong and reckless violence. His lean and raw-boned but swift and vigorous horse, scarcely felt the light weight of its rider ; whilst Velasquez' charger, in addition to the solid bulk of the dragoon, was encumbered

with a well-filled valise and heavy trappings. The distance between pursued and pursuer rapidly diminished; and the sergeant, hearing the clatter of hoofs each moment nearer, looked over his shoulder to see by how many of his enemies he was so obstinately followed. Paco recognised him, and with a shout of exultation again drove the rowels into his horse's belly.

"*Halto! traidor! infame!*" yelled the ex-muleteer. "Stop, coward, and meet your death like a man!"

His invitation was not disregarded. Velasquez, having ascertained that he had but a single pursuer, and that pursuer a man to whom he owed a grudge, and was by no means sorry to give a lesson, pulled up his horse and confronted Paco, who, nothing daunted, came tearing along, waving his lance above his head like a mad Cossack, and shouting imprecations and defiance. As he came up, Velasquez, who had steadily awaited his charge, parried a furious thrust, and at the same time, by a movement of leg and rein which he had often practised in the *manège*, caused his horse to bound aside. Unable immediately to check his steed, Paco passed onwards; but as he did so, Velasquez dealt him a back-handed sabre cut, and the unlucky Carlist fell bleeding and senseless from the saddle. His horse, terrified at its rider's fall, galloped wildly across the country.

"That makes the half-dozen," said the sergeant coolly, looking down on his prostrate foe. "If every one of us had done as much, the day's work would have been better."

And sheathing his sabre, he resumed, but at a more moderate pace, the flight which for a moment had been interrupted.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

“ Como un pobre condenado
Aqui vivo entre cadenas,
A mi xabega amarrado,
Tendido en esta carena.”

Cancion Andaluza.

IN one of the wildest and most secluded of the valleys formed by the sierra of Urbasa and its contiguous ranges, stands a small cluster of houses, differing in few respects from the nine or ten hundred villages and hamlets scattered over the fertile vales and rugged hills of Navarre, but of which, nevertheless, a brief description may not be without interest. The village in question is composed of some five-score houses, for the most part the habitations of peasants, who earn their living by labour in the fields of the neighbouring proprietors, or by the cultivation of small portions of land belonging to themselves. Nothing can be more uniform than the arrangement and construction of Navarrese houses of this class, which are well adapted to the wants and tastes of the race of men who inhabit them, and to the extremes of heat and cold for which the climate of that part of Spain is remarkable. The walls are generally of stone, of which the neighbouring mountains yield an abundant supply; glass windows are rare, and replaced by wooden shutters; the door, usually of great solidity, is hung in a low archway of granite blocks. The entrance is

into a small clay-floored vestibule, answering a variety of purposes. Here are seen implements of agriculture—sometimes a plough, or the heavy iron prongs with which the Basques and Navarrese laboriously turn up the ground in places too steep for the use of oxen; mules or ponies stand tethered here, waiting their turn of duty in the fields, or on the road; and here sacks of vegetables and piles of straw and maize-ears are temporarily deposited, till they can be placed in the granary, usually in the upper part of the house. At the further end, or on one side of this vestibule, a door opens into the stable or cow-shed, and on the other side is the kitchen, which the family habitually occupy. An immense arched chimney projects far into the last-named apartment, and under it is a stone hearth, slightly raised above the tiled floor. Around and upon this tiled hearth, during the long winter evenings, the peasant and his family collect; the room is lighted by a glimmering oil-lamp, and, more effectually, by the bright wood-fire, which crackles and sparkles as the rain-drops or snow-flakes fall into it through the aperture of the chimney. The men smoke and talk, and repose themselves after the fatigues of the day; the women spin, and attend to pots of coarse red earth, in which various preparations of pork, eggs, or salt-fish, with beans and *garbanzos*, (a large pea of excellent flavour,) the whole plentifully seasoned with oil and red pepper, stew and simmer upon the embers. Above stairs are the sleeping and store rooms, the divisions between them often consisting of slight walls of reeds, plastered over and white-washed.

Besides the humble dwellings above described, many of these mountain villages contain two or three houses of larger size and greater pretension, belonging to hidalgos or country gentlemen, who own estates in the neighbourhood. To say nothing of their superior dimensions, glass

in the windows, painted doors and shutters, the arms of the family carved in stone above the entrance, perhaps a few valuable pictures by the old Spanish masters, decorating the apartments, distinguish these aristocratic mansions, which, although spacious and of dignified aspect, frequently afford little more real comfort than the cottages above which they tower.

It was early on an August morning, about a fortnight subsequently to the rescue of Count Villabuena, that a man in an officer's uniform, and who, to judge from the stripe of gold lace on his coat cuff, held the rank of major, knocked at the door of a house of the description last referred to. The applicant for admission was about forty years of age, of middle stature, broad-shouldered and powerful, and his countenance, regular in feature, might have been called handsome but for its peculiarly lowering and sullen expression. Apparently he had just come off a journey; his boots and dress were covered with dust, his face was unshaven, and he had the heated, jaded look of a man who has passed in the saddle the hours usually allotted to repose.

"Is Count Villabuena quartered here?" said he to the servant who opened the door.

"He is, Señor Comandante," replied the man.

The stranger entered the house, and was ushered into a large apartment on the first floor. He had waited there but a few minutes, when the door of an adjoining chamber opened, and Count Villabuena, wrapped in a morning-gown, and seemingly just out of bed, made his appearance.

"Don Baltasar!" exclaimed the Count, in a tone of some surprise, on beholding his early visiter.

"As you see, cousin," replied the new-comer; "glad enough, I assure you, to be at the end of his ride, although the bearer of no very welcome news."

"Whence come you?" said the Count, "and what news do you bring?"

"From Pampeluna, or at least from as near to it as I could venture. My news are bad enough. Yesterday morning, at this hour, Juan Orrio, and the four other officers taken in the skirmish near Echauri, were shot to death on the glacis of Pampeluna."

"Bad indeed!" said the Count, starting, in visible perturbation, from the chair on which he had seated himself.

"Most unfortunate, just at this time."

"At this or at any other time it would hardly be welcome intelligence to the General," observed Don Baltasar. "Orrio was one of the first to join him after he took command of the king's army, and he greatly valued him both as a friend and an officer."

"True," replied Villabuena; "but at this moment I have especial reasons for regretting his death. Have you communicated it to Zumalacarregui?"

"Not yet. I have been to his quarters; he rode out at daybreak, and has not returned. My horse is dead beat, and the direction the General took not being exactly known, I think it better to wait his coming than to follow him. Meanwhile, cousin, a cup of chocolate will be no unwelcome refreshment after the night's march."

Villabuena rang a hand-bell that lay upon the table. Chocolate and other refreshments, and a small brazen cup containing embers for lighting cigars, were brought in, and the Major applied himself vigorously to the discussion of his breakfast.

Major Baltasar de Villabuena, that distant relative of the Count to whom reference has been already made as the intended husband of his daughter, was a soldier of fortune who had entered the army at an early age, and who, at the

outbreak of the Carlist insurrection, was captain in a regiment of the line. He might have risen higher during his twenty years' service, but for his dogged and unpleasant temper, which ever stood in the way of his advancement. The death of the Count's sons, although it constituted him heir to the Villabuena property, made but little real difference in his prospects. The Count was only twelve or fifteen years older than himself, and likely to live nearly as long. The cousins had not met for many years, and had never been on intimate or even friendly terms; and it was therefore with joyful surprise, that, a few days after the commencement of the war, Don Baltasar received a letter from the Count, expressing a wish to see and know more of the man who was to inherit his title and estates. The letter informed him of what he already knew, that the Count had espoused the cause of Charles V.; and it further urged him to throw up his commission in the army of the usurping government, and to hasten to join his kinsman, who would receive him with open arms. Some vague hints concerning a nearer alliance between them, were more than sufficient to raise Don Baltasar's hopes to the highest pitch, and to make him instantly accept the Count's propositions. He resigned his commission and joined the Carlists, by whom he was heartily welcomed; for men of military experience were then scarce amongst them. Don Baltasar was a bold and efficient officer, and the opportunity was favourable for exhibiting his qualities. The Count was at first much pleased with him; and soon afterwards, when the Carlists were temporarily dispersed, and the insurrection was seemingly at an end, Major Villabuena accompanied his cousin to France, and was presented to Rita as her intended husband. But his unpolished manners and brutal abruptness made a most unfavourable impression upon the lady, who did not attempt to conceal her repugnance to her

new suitor. The Count himself, who, amidst the bustle and activity of the life he had recently led, had overlooked or not discovered many of his kinsman's bad qualities, was now not slow in finding them out; and although the proposed marriage was of his own planning, he began almost to congratulate himself on his prudence in having made the promise of his daughter's hand contingent on her encouragement of her cousin's addresses. That encouragement there appeared little probability of Baltasar's obtaining. The gallant Major, however, who entertained an abundantly good opinion of his own merits, instead of attributing the young lady's dislike to any faults or deficiencies of his own, laid it at the door of her attachment to Herrera, of which he had heard something from the Count; and he vowed to himself, that if ever he had the opportunity, he would remove that obstacle from his path, and make short work of it with the beardless boy who stood between him and the accomplishment of his wishes.

Whilst the Major satisfied the keen appetite given him by his night's ride, Count Villabuena restlessly paced the room, his features expressing anxiety and annoyance.

"You take this news much to heart, Count," said Baltasar. "I knew not that Orrio, or any other of the sufferers, was your friend."

"None of them were particularly my friends," replied the Count; "nor does my regret for their fate exceed that which I should feel for any other brave and unfortunate men who might lose their lives in the service of his Majesty. But their death at this precise conjuncture is most unfortunate. You have heard me speak of Luis Herrera?"

"Herrera!" repeated Baltasar, with affected unconcern; "is not that the name of your former protégé, the love-

stricken swain who dared aspire to the hand of your fair daughter?"

"The same," replied the Count gravely.

"He is with the enemy," said Baltasar; "holds a commission in a cavalry regiment now in our front. I trust to fall in with him some day, and to exchange a sabre-cut in honour of the bright eyes of my charming cousin."

"He would find you employment if you did," replied the Count. "He is a brave lad and a skilful soldier. But at present there is small chance of your meeting him, at least with a sword in his hand. He is a prisoner, and in this village."

"Ha!" exclaimed Baltasar, his dark deep-set eyes emitting a gleam of satisfaction. "And what will Zumalacarregui do with him?"

"Up to yesterday, I trusted to procure his release. The General seemed half inclined to grant it, as well as that of the other captive officers, if they would take an oath not to bear arms against the King. A few of them had agreed to the required pledge; and although the others, including Herrera, obstinately refused, I was not without hopes of overcoming their repugnance. But news came last evening of the excesses that Rodil's division has committed in Biscay, burning houses, ill-treating the peasantry, and refusing quarter to prisoners. This greatly exasperated the General, and he talked of recommencing the system of reprisals, which, since the removal of Quesada from the command of the Christino forces, has been in some degree abandoned."

"You are particularly interested, then, in the fate of this Herrera?" said Baltasar, with a searching glance at the Count.

"I am so, for various reasons. His father and myself,

although of different political creeds, were old friends; the son was long an inmate of my house, and I once thought of him as my future son-in-law. If he has taken up arms against his rightful sovereign, it is from a mistaken sense of duty, and not, as many have done, with a view to personal gain and advantage. Moreover, during my recent short captivity, of which you have probably heard, he twice saved my life; once at great risk and with positive detriment to himself."

"Numerous and sufficing motives," said Baltasar, with a slight sneer.

"Undoubtedly they are," replied the Count; "and you now see why I regret your arrival and the intelligence you bring. The General's indignation at the slaughter of Orrio and his companions will place the lives of Herrera and the other prisoners in great jeopardy."

"I am sorry," said Baltasar, in a tone which belied his professed concern, "that my arrival should interfere with your plans, and endanger the life of your friend."

"I can scarcely believe in your regrets, cousin," replied the Count, "or that you will grieve for the death of one whom you regard as a rival. But again I tell you that Herrera can never be my daughter's husband; and although you have the impression that he is now the chief obstacle to your success with Rita, time cannot fail to obliterate her childish attachment. Be sure that you will do more towards winning her favour by acting generously in the present conjuncture than if you seized the opportunity to compass Herrera's death."

"I do not understand you, Count," said Baltasar. "You talk as if the young man's life or death were in my hands. I bring intelligence which must be conveyed to the General as speedily as possible, and I am no way responsible for the

consequences. I cannot believe that you would have me forget my duty, and suppress news of this importance."

"Certainly not," answered the Count; "but much depends on the way in which such things are told. Moreover, the General talked yesterday of calling a council of war, to deliberate and decide on the fate of the prisoners. Should he do so, you will be a member of it; and if you wish to please me, you will give your vote on the side of mercy."

What reply Don Baltasar would have made to this request, must remain unknown; for, before he had time to speak, the conversation was interrupted by a knock at the door of the apartment, and an aid-de-camp of Zumalacarregui entered the room.

"The General has returned from his ride, Major Villabuena," said the officer; "he has heard of your arrival, and is impatient to see you."

"I will accompany you to him," said Baltasar, by no means sorry to break off his dialogue with the Count.

"General Zumalacarregui requests your presence also, Señor Conde," said the aid-de-camp.

"I will shortly wait upon him," replied Villabuena.

The two officers left the house, and the Count re-entered his sleeping apartment to complete his toilet.

On reaching Zumalacarregui's quarters, Major Villabuena found the Carlist chief seated at a table, upon which were writing materials, two or three maps, and some open letters. Several aid-de-camps, superior officers, and influential partisans of Don Carlos, stood near him, walked up and down the room, or lounged at the windows that looked out upon the winding irregular street of the village. In the court-yard of the house, a picket of lancers stood near their horses, which were saddled and bridled, ready to turn out at a moment's notice; a sentry paced up and down in front

of the door, and on the highest points of the hills which rose behind the village, vedettes were seen stationed. Although there were more than a dozen persons in the apartment, scarcely a word was uttered; or if a remark was interchanged, it was in a low whisper. Zumalacarregui himself sat silent and thoughtful, his brow knit, his eyes fixed upon the papers before him. The substance of the intelligence brought by Don Baltasar had already reached him through some officers, to whom the Major had communicated it on his first arrival at the General's quarters; and Zumalacarregui waited in a state of painful anxiety to hear its confirmation and further details. He foresaw that extreme measures would be necessary to put an end to the system adopted by the Christinos, of treating the prisoners they made as rebels and malefactors, instead of granting them the quarter and fair usage commonly enjoyed by prisoners of war; but although Zumalacarregui had been compelled, by the necessities of his position, to many acts of severity and apparent cruelty, his nature was in reality humane, and the shedding of human blood abhorrent to him. It was, therefore, with some difficulty that he resolved upon a course, the adoption of which was indispensable to the advancement of the cause he defended.

Don Baltasar made his report. Two days previously, he said, whilst reconnoitring with a handful of men in the neighbourhood of Pampeluna, and observing the movements of the garrison, he was informed that an execution of Carlist prisoners was to take place in that city on the following morning. He sent a peasant to ascertain the truth of this rumour. By some accident the man was detained all night in the fortress, and in the morning he had the opportunity of witnessing the death of Captain Orrió and four other officers, who were shot upon the glacis in presence of the

assembled garrison. This was the substance of the Major's report, to which Zumalacarregui listened with the fixed and profound attention he was accustomed to give to all who addressed him. But not contented with relating the bare facts of the case, Don Baltasar, either unmindful of his cousin's wishes, or desirous, for reasons of his own, to produce an effect as unfavourable as possible to the Christino prisoners, did all he could to place the cruelties exercised on the unfortunate Carlists in the strongest possible light.

"Your Excellency will doubtless grieve for the loss of these brave and devoted officers," said he, as he concluded his report; "but to them death was a boon and a release. The information brought by our spies concerning the cruelty with which they were treated, exceeds belief. Crowded into loathsome dungeons, deprived of the commonest necessities of life, fed on mouldy bread and putrid water, and overwhelmed with blows if they ventured to expostulate—such were the tender mercies shown by the agents of Christina to the unhappy Orrio and his gallant companions. Although their imprisonment was but of three weeks' duration, their weakness and emaciation were such that they could scarcely walk to the place of execution, which they reached amidst the jeers and insults of their escort."

There was a movement of horror and indignation amongst the listeners.

"The savages!" muttered Zumalacarregui. "And how did they meet their death?"

"Like heroes. Their last look was defiance to their enemies, their last words a *viva* for their King. It is said the Christinos offered them their lives to renounce Charles V. and take up arms for Isabel; but to a man they refused the offer."

"Truly," said Zumalacarregui, "the cause must be good and righteous that finds such noble defenders. Have you heard aught of the prisoners at Tafalla, Major Villabuena?"

"They are still detained there," said the Major, "but it is said that orders for their execution are daily expected."

"By whom is it said, or is it merely a supposition of your own?" said a voice behind Don Baltasar.

The Major turned and met the stern gaze of the Count, who had entered the room unobserved. Baltasar looked confused, and faltered in his reply. "He had heard it — it was generally believed," he said.

"Such reports are easily circulated, or invented by those who find an interest in their fabrication," said the Count. "I trust that General Zumalacarregui will not place implicit faith in them, or allow them to influence his decision with regard to the unfortunate Christino officers."

"Certainly not," returned Zumalacarregui; "but the undoubted facts that have yesterday and to-day come to my knowledge, render any additional atrocity on the part of our enemies unnecessary. The volley fired yesterday on the glaxis of Pampeluna, was the death-knell of their own friends. Count Villabuena, the prisoners must die."

A hum of approbation ran through the assembly.

"With such opponents as ours," said Zumalacarregui, "humanity becomes weakness. Captain Solano, a confessor for the prisoners, and a firing-party for to-morrow noon."

The officer addressed left the room to fulfil these commands; and Zumalacarregui, as if desirous to get rid of a painful subject, called Count Villabuena and some of his officers around him, to discuss a proposed plan of operations against the division of one of the generals whom Rodil had left to follow up the Carlist chief during his own absence in Biscay.

In the apartment in which the interview between the Conde de Villabuena and his cousin had taken place, and within a few hours after the scene in Zumalacarregui's quarters, the Count was seated alone, revolving in his mind various schemes for the rescue of Luis Herrera from his imminent peril. To rescue him, even at risk or sacrifice to himself, the Count was fully resolved; the difficulty was, to devise a plan offering a reasonable chance of success. An appeal to Zumalacarregui would, he well knew, be worse than useless. The General had decided on the death of the prisoners from a conviction of its justice and utility; and, had his own brother been amongst them, no exception would have been made. The Count, therefore, found reason to rejoice at having said nothing to Zumalacarregui of the interest he felt in Herrera personally, and at having based his intercession in behalf of the prisoners on the general ground of humanity. A contrary course would greatly have increased the danger of the plans he now formed. Since there was no hope of obtaining Herrera's pardon, he was determined to accomplish his escape. How to do this was a difficulty, out of which he did not yet clearly see his way. The village was small, and crowded with Carlist soldiers; the prisoners were strictly guarded; and even should he succeed in setting Herrera at liberty, it would be no easy matter to get him conveyed in safety to one of the Christino posts or garrisons, the nearest of which was several leagues distant, whilst the road to it lay through a wild and difficult country, entirely unknown to Luis, and containing a population devoted to Don Carlos.

It was three in the afternoon. Count Villabuena leaned over the balcony of his apartment, and gazed musingly into the street of the little village. The scene that offered itself was one that at any other moment might have fixed

his attention, although he was now too much pre-occupied to notice its picturesque details. The rays of the August sun fell in a broad flood of light upon the scattered houses of the hamlet, making the flint and granite of their walls to glitter again; the glare being only here and there relieved by a scanty patch of shadow, thrown by some projecting wall, or by the thick foliage of a tree. The presence of the Carlist troops caused an unusual degree of bustle and animation in the village. Many of the houses had for the time been converted into shops and taverns; in the former, tobacco, fruit, sardinas, and other soldiers' luxuries, were exposed for sale on a board in front of the window; in the latter, huge pig-skins, of black and greasy exterior, poured forth a dark stream of wine, having at least as much flavour of the tar with which the interior of its leathern receptacle was besmeared, as of the grape from which the generous liquid had been originally pressed. Through the open windows of various houses, glimpses were caught of the blue caps, strongly marked countenances, and fierce mustaches of the Carlist soldiers; their strangely-sounding Basque oaths and ejaculations mingling with the clack of the castanets and monotonous thrum of the tambourine, as they followed the sunburnt peasant girls through the mazes of the Zorcico and other national dances. Hanging over the window-sills, or suspended from nails in the wall, were rows of belts, which the soldiers had profited by the day's halt—no very frequent occurrence with them—to clean and pipeclay, and had placed to dry in the sun. Here, just within the open door of a stable, were men polishing their musket-barrels, or repairing their accoutrements; in another place a group, more idly disposed, had collected in a shady nook, and were playing at cards or *morra*; whilst others, wrapped in their grey capotes, their

heads resting upon a knapsack or doorstep, indulged in the sound and unbroken slumber which their usually restless and dangerous existence allowed them but scanty opportunity of enjoying.

The house occupied by Count Villabuena was nearly in the centre of one of the irregular lines of detached buildings that formed the village. About a hundred yards further off, on the opposite side of the road, from which they receded, and were partially screened by some barns and a plantation of fruit-trees, there stood two houses united under one roof. They were of the description usually inhabited by peasants of the richer sort, and consisted of a ground floor, an upper story, and of a sort of garret under the tiles, which might serve as the abode of pigeons, or perhaps, in case of need, afford sleeping quarters for a farm-servant. In one of these houses, where a number of soldiers were billeted, a guard-room had been established, and in the other, before the door and beneath the side-windows of which sentries were stationed, the prisoners were confined. They had been brought to this village immediately after their capture, as to a place of security, and one little likely to be visited by any Christino column. Zumalacarregui had accompanied them thither, but had marched away on the following day, leaving only a few wounded men and a company behind him. He had now again returned, to give his troops a day or two's repose, after some harassing marches and rapid movements. Count Villabuena had accompanied the General upon this last expedition, but not without previously ascertaining that Herrera was well cared for, and that the wound in his arm, which was by no means severe, was attended to by a competent surgeon. The prisoners were lodged in a room upon the upper floor, with the exception of Herrera, to whom, in

consideration of his suffering state, a small chamber near the apartment of his comrades had been specially allotted. Its window, which overlooked the open country and was about fifteen feet from the ground, was guarded by a sentry, who had orders to fire upon the prisoners at the first indication of an attempt to escape.

Whilst the Conde de Villabuena gazed on the temporary prison, of which he commanded a view from his balcony, and meditated how he should overcome the almost insuperable difficulties that opposed themselves to Herrera's rescue, there emerged from the door of the guard-room a man, whose gait and figure the Count thought he knew, although he was too far distant to discern his features. This person was in a sort of half-uniform ; a blue jacket decorated with three rows of metal buttons, coarse linen trousers, and on his head the customary woollen boina. Beneath the latter appeared a white linen bandage, none of the cleanest, and considerably stained with blood. The wearer's face was pale and thin, and the Count conjectured him to be one of the wounded, recently out of hospital. Presently the person who had thus attracted Villabuena's notice, turned into the street, and keeping on the shady side, either from a dislike to the heat, or out of regard to his recently bleached complexion, walked slowly along till he arrived near the Count's window ; then looking up, he brought his hand to his cap, and saluted. In so doing he exposed to view the well-known features of Paco the muleteer.

The surprise felt by the Count at the reappearance of this man, whom he fully believed to have been killed when he himself was rescued from the Christinos by Zumalacarregui, was succeeded by a joyful foreboding. By the aid of Paco, with whose sagacity and courage he was well acquainted,

who at a former period had been in his service, and whom he knew to be entirely devoted to him, he felt sure that he should be able to accomplish Herrera's escape. Giving one glance around to see that he was not observed, he made a sign to the muleteer. In another moment Paco entered the apartment.

"I thought you in your grave, Paco," said Villabuena, "and so did we all. I myself saw you lying in the dust of the road, with a sabre-cut on your head that would have killed an ox."

"Not so bad as it looked," replied the Navarrese. "Nothing like a close-woven boina for turning a sabre-edge. Pepe Velasquez is a hard hitter, and if I had worn one of their pasteboard shakos, my head would have been split in two like a ripe tomata. But as it was, the blow glanced sideways, and only shaved off a bit of the scalp, though it left me senseless, and as like dead as might be. After the troops and your Señoria marched away, and just as life returned, some peasants found me. They took me home and doctored me, and three days ago I was well enough to crawl hither. I am getting strong and hearty, and shall soon be in the saddle again."

"So much the better," replied the Count. "We want all the men we can muster, and especially brave fellows like yourself. Meanwhile, what are you doing, and where are you quartered?"

"In the house of José Urriola, where the guard-room is. My duty is to take the prisoners their rations, and clean out their room. Poor Don Luis, as your Señoria doubtless knows, is amongst them."

"I do know it, and concerning him I wish to speak to you. Paco, I know I can depend on you."

"You can, your Señoria," replied the muleteer. "Do

you think I have forgotten all your honour's kindness, how you got me out of the scrape about the smuggling?"

"Or the one about thrashing the alguazils," returned the Count, with a smile.

"Ah! your Señoria was always very good to me," said Paco; "and I am not the man to forget it."

"You have an opportunity of showing your gratitude," said the Count. "Have you heard that the prisoners are to be shot to-morrow?"

Paco started.

"And Don Luis with them?"

The Count nodded affirmatively.

"It will be the death of Doña Rita," exclaimed Paco with blunt passion. "Speak to the General—you can do it. He will not refuse Señor Herrera's life, if you ask it."

"You are mistaken," said Villabuena; "in that quarter there is no hope. The only chance for Don Luis is his escape, before to-morrow morning."

Paco shook his head, and remained silent. The Count observed him attentively.

"It is difficult," said the muleteer, "and dangerous."

"Difficulties may be overcome; for dangers, you shall be amply recompensed," said the Count, anxiously.

"I want no recompense, Señor," cried the Navarrese, with one of those bursts of free and manly independence that characterise his countrymen. "I will do it for you, if it cost me my life."

"But how is it to be accomplished?" said the Count.

"Does a plan occur to you?"

"I could do it alone," said Paco musingly, "had I been ten days longer off the doctor's list. But I am still weak; and even if I got Don Luis out of his prison, I should be unable to accompany him till he is out of danger. I take it

he will want a guide. I must have some one to help me, Señor Conde."

"That increases the danger," said the Count. "Whom can we trust?"

"I can find some one," said Paco, after a moment's reflection, "who will be safe and silent, if well paid."

The Count opened a writing-desk, and produced several gold ounces.

"A dozen of those will be sufficient," said Paco; "perhaps fewer. I will do it as cheap as I can; for I suppose the *pesetas* are not more plentiful with your Señoria than with most of Charles V.'s followers. But one must not bargain too closely for a man's life."

"Nor will I do so," said the Count. "Here is the sum you name, and something over. Who is your man?"

"Your Señoria has heard of Romany Jaime, the gipsy *esquilador*?"

The Count made a movement of surprise.

"He is one of our spies; devoted to the General. You cannot think of trusting him?"

"He is devoted to any body who pays him," returned Paco. "I knew him well in former days, when I bought mules in the mountains of Arragon. An arch rogue is Master Jaime, and will do any thing for gold. I daresay he serves the General honestly, being well paid; but he will look upon our job as a godsend, and jump at the chance."

"I doubt the plan," said the Count. "I am bent upon saving Herrera, and have made up my mind to some risk; but this appears too great."

"And what need your Señoria know about the matter at all?" said the ready-witted Paco. "No one has seen me here; or, if any one has, nothing will be thought of it. The money was given me by the prisoner—I ar-

range the matter with Jaime, and to-morrow morning, when the escape is discovered, who is to tax you with a share in it?"

"'Tis well," said the Count—"I leave all to you; and the more willingly, as my further interference might rather excite suspicion than prove of service. If you want money or advice, come to me. I shall be here the whole evening."

Upon leaving the Count's quarters, Paco lounged carelessly down the street, with that listless think-of-nothing sort of air which is a characteristic of the Spanish soldier, till he arrived opposite a narrow passage between two houses, at the extremity of which was a stile, and beyond it a green field, and the foliage of trees. Turning down this lane, he entered the field, and crossed it in a diagonal direction, till he reached its further corner. Here, on the skirt of a coppice, and under the shade of some large chestnut-trees, a group was assembled, and a scene presented itself, that might be sought in vain in any country but Spain. Above a wood-fire, which burned black and smouldering in the strong daylight, a large iron kettle hung, emitting an odour that would infallibly have turned the stomachs of more squeamish or less hungry persons than those for whom its contents were destined. It would have required an expert chemist to analyse the ingredients of this caldron, of which the attendant Hecate was a barefooted, grimy-visaged drummer-boy, temporarily promoted to the office of cook, who hung with watering lips, and eyes blinking from the effect of the wood smoke, over the precious stew intrusted to his care. Occasionally he stirred it with a drum-stick, which he immediately afterwards transferred to his mouth, provoking a catalogue of grimaces that the heat of the boiling mess and its savoury flavour had probably an equal share in producing. Another juve-

nile performer on the sheepskin squatted upon his haunch on the opposite side of the fire, acting as a check upon an excess of voracity on the part of his comrade, whilst diligently employed his dirty digits and a rusty knife peeling and slicing a large pumpkin, whose fragments, soon as they were in a fitting state, were plunged into the pot. A quantity of onion skins and tomata stalks, rusty bacon rind, the skin of a lean rabbit, and feathers that might have belonged either to a crow or a chicken, bestrewed the ground, affording intelligible hints as to a few of the heterogeneous materials already committed to the bowels of the huge kettle.

At a short distance from the fire, so placed as to be out of the current of smoke, a score of soldiers sprawled upon the grass, intent upon the proceedings of a person who sat in the centre of their circle. This was a man whose countenance, dark as that of a Moor, caused even the sunburnt countenances of his neighbours to appear fair by comparison. His eyes were deep-set and of a dead coal-black, and around them, as well as at the corners of his large mouth, which, at times, displayed a double row of sharp teeth of ivory whiteness, were certain lines and wrinkles that gave to his physiognomy an expression in the highest degree repulsive. Deceit, low cunning, and greed of gain were legibly written upon this unprepossessing countenance, whose wild character was completed by a profusion of coarse dark hair, that hung or rather stuck out in black elf-locks around the receding forehead and tawny sunken cheeks. The dress of this man was in unison with his aspect. He wore a greasy velveteen jacket, loose trousers of the same stuff, and his feet were shod with *abarcas*—a kind of sandals in common use in some parts of Navarre and Biscay, composed of a flat piece of tanned pig's hide, secured across

the instep by thongs. A leathern wallet was upon the ground beside him, and near it were scattered sundry pairs of shears and scissors, used to clip mules and other animals. The *esquilador*, or shearer—for such was the profession of the individual just described—had found a subject for the exercise of his art in a large white dog of the poodle species, who, with exemplary patience, the result probably of a frequent repetition of the same process, lay upon his back between the operator's knees, all four legs in the air, exposing his ribs and belly to the scissors that rapidly divested them of their thick fleece. The operation excited intense interest amongst the surrounding soldiers, who followed with their eyes each clip of the shears and movement of the *esquilador's* agile fingers, and occasionally encouraged the patient, their constant companion and playmate both in quarters and the field, by expressions of sympathy and affection. The arrival of Paco, who established himself behind the *esquilador*, in a gap of the circle, was insufficient to distract their attention from the important and all-absorbing interest of the dog-shearing.

"*Pobre Granuka!*" cried one of the lookers-on, patting the dog's head, which lay back over the *esquilador's* knee; "how quiet he is! Sensible animal! How fares it, *Granukita?*—how is it with you?"

The dog replied by a blinking of his eyes, and by passing his tongue over his black snout, to this kind inquiry concerning his state of personal comfort.

"*Mira! que entendido!*" cried the gratified soldier; "he understands every word. Come, gitano—have you nearly done? The poor dog's weary of lying on his back."

The last trimming was given, and the liberated animal jumped up and raced round the circle, as if anxious to show his friends how greatly he was improved by the process he

had undergone. His face and the hinder half of his body were closely clipped, his shoulders and forelegs remaining covered with a fell of woolly hair; whilst at the end of his tail, the cunning artist had left, by express desire of the soldiers, a large tuft, like a miniature mop, which Granuka brandished in triumph above his clean-shaven flanks.

“*Que hermoso!*” screamed one of the delighted soldiers, catching Granuka in his arms, kissing his muzzle, and then pitching him down with a violence that would have broken the bones of any dog but a regimental one.

“Attention, Granuka!” cried another of the quadruped’s numerous masters, dropping on his knees before the dog, and uplifting his finger to give force to the command. At the word, Granuka bounced down upon his hinder end, and assumed an aspect of profound gravity.

“A *viva* for the *niña* Isabel,” said his instructor. Granuka stretched his paws out before him, laid his nose upon them, and winked with his eyes as if composing himself to sleep.

“Won’t you?” said the soldier. “Well, then, a *viva* for the *puta* Christina.”

This time the eyes were closed entirely, and the animal gave a dissatisfied growl.

“A *viva* for the King!” was the next command.

The dog jumped briskly up, gave a little leap into the air, and uttered three short, quick barks, which were echoed by shouts of laughter from the soldiers. Having done this, he again sat down, grave and composed.

“Once more,” said his instructor, “and a good one, Granuka. *Viva el Tio Zumalacarregui!*”

This time the dog seemed to have lost his senses, or to have been bitten by a tarantula. He jumped off the ground half-a-dozen times to thrice his own height, giving

a succession of joyous yelps that resembled a human cachinnation far more than any sounds of canine origin or utterance. Then, as if delighted at his own performances, he dashed out of the circle, and tore about the field, his tail in the air, yelling like mad. The soldiers doubled themselves up, and rolled upon the grass in convulsions of merriment. As ill-luck would have it, however, Granuka, in one of his frolicsome gyrations, in the performance of which the curve described was larger than the preceding ones, came within sight and scent of the *al fresco* kitchen, at the precise moment when the cook, either conceiving his olla to be sufficiently stewed, or desirous to ascertain its progress by actual inspection, had fished out by the claw one of the anomalous-looking bipeds whose feathers bestrewed the ground, and had placed it upon the reversed lid of the camp-kettle. Granuka, either unusually hungry, or imagining that the savoury morsel had been prepared expressly as a reward for his patience and docility under his recent trials, made a dart at the bird, caught it in his mouth, and with lowered tail, but redoubled speed, scampered towards the houses.

"*Maldito perro ! Ladron !*" roared the cook, hurling his drumstick after the thief, abandoning his kitchen and starting in pursuit, followed by the soldiers who had witnessed the nefarious transaction, and whose shouts of laughter were suddenly changed into cries of indignation. The stolen bird was of itself hot enough to have made any common dog glad to drop it ; but Granuka was an uncommon dog, an old campaigner, whose gums were fire-proof, and the idea of relinquishing his prize never entered his head. Presently he reached the stile at the end of the field, darted under it and disappeared, followed by cooks and soldiers, swearing and laughing, abusing the dog, and

tripping up one another. In less than a half minute from the commission of the theft, Paco and the esquilador were the only persons remaining in the field.

So soon as this was the case, Paco abandoned his position in rear of the gipsy, and came round to his front. The dog shearer had slung his wallet over his shoulder, and replaced in it his scissors and the other implements of his craft.

"Good-day, Jaime," said Paco.

The gipsy glanced at the muleteer from under his projecting eyebrows, and nodded a surly recognition.

"Will you come with me to clip a mule?" said Paco.

"I have no time," replied the esquilador. "The heat of the day is past, and I must be moving. I have ten leagues to do between this and morning."

"A quartillo of wine will be no bad preparation for the journey," said the muleteer; "I will readily bestow one in memory of the spavined mule you tried to palm upon me, but could not, now some three years past."

The gipsy gave another of his furtive and peculiar glances, accompanied by a slight grin.

"Thanks for your offer," said he; "but I tell you again I have no time either to drink or shear. I must be gone before those mad fellows return, and detain me by some new prank."

The noisy chatter and laughter of the soldiers was heard as he spoke. The dog had got clear off, and they were returning to the kettle, to devour what was left in it. The gipsy turned to go, when Paco put his hand into his pocket, and on again drawing it forth, a comely golden ounce, with the coarse features of Ferdinand VII. stamped in strong relief on its bright yellow surface, lay upon the palm. The eyes of the esquilador sparkled at the sight. He extended his hand to clutch the coin. Paco closed his fingers.

"Gently, friend Jaime," said he; "nothing for nothing is a good motto to grow rich upon. This shining *onça*, and more of the same sort, may be yours when you have done service for them."

"And what do you require of me?" said the gipsy, with a quick eagerness that contrasted strongly with his previous apathetic indifference.

"I will tell you," said Paco, "but in a more private place than this."

"Let us be gone," said the gipsy.

And as the first of the soldiers re-entered the field, the two men passed through a gap in the hedge that bounded it, and were lost to view in the adjacent thicket.

It was about an hour after sunset, and, contrary to what is usual at that season and in that country, the night was dark and cloudy. A slight mist rose from the fields surrounding the village, and a fine rain fell. In the guard-room adjoining Luis Herrera's prison, the soldiers on duty were assembled round a rickety table, on which a large coarse tallow candle, stuck in a bottle, flared and guttered, and emitted an odour even more powerful than that of the tobacco smoke which filled the room. The air was heavy, the heat oppressive, and both the house-door and that of the guard-room, which was at right angles to it, just within the passage, were left open. Whilst some few of the men, their arms crossed upon the table, their heads laid upon them, dozed away the time till their turn for sentry should arrive, the sergeant, and the remainder of the guard, including a young recruit who had only two days before deserted from the Christinos and been incorporated in a Carlist battalion, consumed successive measures of wine, to be paid for by those who were least successful in a trial of

skill then going on amongst them. This consisted in drinking *de alto*, as it is called—literally, from a height, and was accomplished by holding a small narrow-necked bottle at arm's length above the head, and allowing the wine to flow in a thin stream into the mouth. In this feat of address the recruit, whose name was Perrico, was so successful as to excite the envy of his less dexterous rivals.

"Pshaw!" said the sergeant, who, in a clumsily executed attempt, had inundated his chin and mustache with the purple liquid—"Pshaw!" said he, on seeing the deserter raise his bottle in the air, and allow its contents to trickle steadily and noiselessly down his expanded gullet; "Perrico beats us all."

"No wonder," said a soldier; "he is from the country where Grenache and Tinto are more plenty than water, and where nobody drinks in any other way, or ever puts a glass to his lips. He is a Catalan."

"An Arragonese," hastily interrupted Perrico, eager to vindicate himself from belonging to a province which the rough manners and harsh dialect of its inhabitants caused generally to be held in small estimation throughout the rest of Spain. "An Arragonese, from the *siempre heroica* Sarragossa."

"It's all one," said the sergeant, with a horse-laugh—"all of the *corona de Aragon*, as the Catalans say when they are ashamed of their country. But what induced you, Don Perrico, being from Sarragossa, where they are all as revolutionary as Riego, to leave the service of the Neapolitan woman, and join Charles V.?"

"Many things," answered the deserter. "In the first place, I am of a thirsty family. My father kept a wine shop and my mother was a cantiniera, and both drank a

much as they sold. I inherit an unfortunate addiction to the wine-skin, which upon several occasions has brought me into trouble and the black-hole. This did not please me, and I resolved to seek better treatment in the service of King Charles."

"You will hardly find it, if you have brought your thirst with you," answered the sergeant. "Zumalacarregui does not joke in matters of discipline; so, if your thirst troubles you here, I advise you to quench it at the pump. But that will be the easier, as neither wine nor money are like to be over-abundant with us."

At this moment, and before Perrico could reply to the sergeant's warning, the sentry in front of the house suspended his walk and uttered a sharp "Quien vive?"

"Carlos Quinto," was the reply.

Another pass-word was exchanged, and then a step was audible in the passage, and the bandaged head and pale face of Paco appeared at the guard-room door. The muleteer was received with a cry of welcome from the soldiers.

"Hurra!" cried the sergeant; "here is your match, Perrico. No Catalan or Arragonese, but a jolly Navarro. A week's pay to a wet cartridge, he empties this bottle *de alto* without spilling a drop."

And he held out one of the small bottles before mentioned, which contained something like an English pint. Paco took it, raised it as high as he could in the air, and gradually depressing the neck, the wine poured out in a slender and continuous stream, which the muleteer, his head thrown back, caught in his mouth. The bottle was emptied without a single drop being spilt, or a stain appearing on the face of the drinker.

"Bravo, Paco!" cried the soldiers.

"Could not be better," quoth Perrico.

"You are making a jolly guard of it," said Paco. "Wine seems as common as ditch-water. Who pays the shot?"

"I!" cried the sergeant, clapping his hand on his pocket which gave forth a sound most harmoniously metallic. "You have inherited, friend Paco; and, if you will sit down with us, you shall drink yourself blind without its costing you a *ochavo*."

"'Twould hardly suit my broken head," returned the muleteer. "But from whom have you inherited? From the dead or the living?"

"The living to be sure," replied the sergeant laughing. "From a fat Christino alcalde, with whom I fell in the other morning upon the Salvatierra road. His saddle-bags were worth the rummaging."

"I can't drink myself," said Paco; "but let me take out a glass to poor Blas, who is walking up and down, listening to the jingle of the bottles, as tantalized as a mule at the door of a corn-store."

"Against the regulations," said the sergeant. "Wait till he comes off sentry, and he shall have a skinful."

"Pooh!" said Paco, "a cup of wine will break no bones on sentry or off."

And taking advantage of the excellent humour in which his potations had put the non-commissioned officer, he filled a large earthen mug with wine, and left the room.

The sentinel was leaning against the house-wall, his coat skirt wrapped round the lock of his musket to protect it from the drizzling rain, and looked as if he would gladly have exchanged his solitary guard for a share in the revelry of his comrades, when Paco came out, the cup of wine in his hand, whistling in a loud key a popular Basque melody. The soldier took the welcome beverage, unsuspecting of any but a friendly motive on the part of the donor, raised

it to his lips, and drank it slowly off, as if to make the pleasure of the draught as long as possible. Thus engaged, he did not observe a man lurking in the shadow of an opposite barn, and who, taking advantage of the sentinel's momentary inattention, and of the position of Paco, who stood so as to mask his movements from the soldier, glided across the street, darted into the house, and, passing unseen and unheard before the open door of the guard-room, nimbly and noiselessly ascended the stairs.

The sentinel drained the cup to the last drop, returned it to Paco, gave a deep sigh of satisfaction, and, cheered by the draught, briskly recommenced his monotonous march. Paco re-entered the guard-room, and placed the cup upon the table.

The wine had made visible inroads on the sobriety of the soldiers, and the propriety of putting an end to the debauch occurred to the non-commissioned officer.

"Come, boys," cried he, "knock off from drinking, or you'll hardly go through your facings, if required."

"Only one glass more, sergeant," cried Perrico. There is still a pleasant tinkle in the *borracha*."

And he shook the large leathern bottle which held the supply of wine.

"Only one more, then," said the sergeant, unable to resist the temptation, and holding out his glass. Perrico filled it to the brim, and afterwards did the same for three soldiers who still kept their places at the table, the others having composed themselves to sleep upon the benches round the room. For himself, however, as Paco, who stood behind him, had opportunity of observing, the deserter poured out little or nothing, though he kept the cup at his lips as long as if he drank an equal share with his comrades.

"Now," said the sergeant, thumping his glass upon the table, "not another drop. And you, Master Perrico, though your father did keep a wine-shop, and your mother carry the brandy-keg, let me advise you to put your head under the fountain, and then lie down and sleep till your turn for sentry. It will come in an hour or two."

"And where shall I be posted?" hiccuped Perrico, who, to all appearance, felt the effects of the strong Navarrese wine.

"Under the prisoners' window," was the reply, "where you will need to keep a bright look-out. For a colonel's commission, I would not be in your jacket if they escape during your guard. To-morrow's firing-party would make a target of you."

"No fear," replied the young man. "I could drink another *azumbre* and be none the worse for it."

"*Fanfarron!*" said the sergeant; "you talk big enough for an Andalusian, instead of an Arragonese."

And so saying, the worthy sergeant, feeling that his own temples were somewhat of the hottest, walked to the door of the house to cool them in the night air. Paco wished him good-night; and, lighting a long thin taper, composed of tow dipped in rosin, at the guard-room candle, ascended the stairs to his own dormitory.

The room, or rather kennel, appropriated to the lodging of the muleteer, was the triangular garret, already referred to, formed by the ceiling of the upper story and the roof of the house, which rose in an obtuse angle above it. Its greatest elevation was about six feet, and that only in the centre, whence the tiles slanted downwards on either side to the beams by which the floor was supported. The entrance was by a step-ladder, and through a trap-door, against which Paco gave two very slight but peculiar taps.

Thereupon a bolt was cautiously withdrawn, and the trap raised; the muleteer completed the ascent of the steps, entered the loft, and found himself face to face with Jaime the gipsy.

"No one saw you?" said Paco, in a cautious whisper.

"No one," replied the esquilador, reseating himself upon Paco's bed, from which he had risen to give admittance to the muleteer. The bed consisted of a wooden *catre*, or frame, supporting a large square bag of coarse sackcloth, half full of dried maize-leaves, and having a rent in the centre, through which to introduce the arm, and shake up the contents. The only other furniture of the room was a chair with a broken back. On the floor lay the gipsy's wallet, and his abarcas, which he had taken off to avoid noise during his clandestine entrance into the house. The gipsy himself was busy tying a slip-knot at the end of a stout rope eight or ten yards long. Another piece of cord, of similar length and thickness, lay beside him, having much the appearance of a halter, owing to the noose already made at one of its extremities. The tiles and rafters covering the room were green with damp, and, through various small apertures, allowed the wind and even the rain to enter with a facility which would have rendered the abode untenable for a human inhabitant during any but the summer season. In one slope of the roof was an opening in the tiles, at about four feet from the floor, closed by a wooden door, and large enough to give egress to a man. To this opening Paco now pointed.

"Through there," said he.

The gipsy nodded.

"The roof is strong," continued Paco, "and will bear us well. We creep along the top till we get to the chimney at the further end, just over the window of the

prisoner's room. I have explained to you what is then to be done."

"It is hazardous," said the gipsy. "If a tile slips under our feet, or the sentries catch sight of us, we shall be picked off the house-top like sparrows."

"Perfectly true," said Paco; "but the tiles will not slip, and the night is too dark for the sentries to see us. Besides, friend Jaime, ten ounces are not to be earned by saying paternosters, or without risk."

"Risk enough already," grumbled the gipsy. "At this hour I ought to be five leagues away, and if he, on whose service I am bound, finds out that I have tarried, no tree in the sierra will be too high to hang me on."

"You must hope that he will not find it out," said Paco coolly.

"Did you give the prisoner a hint of our plan?" inquired the gitano.

"Impossible. I visit him but once a-day, to take him his rations, and that at noon. Since I arranged this plan, I endeavoured to get admittance to him, but was repulsed by the sentry. To have insisted would have caused suspicion. He knows, however, that he is to be shot to-morrow, and is not likely to be asleep."

Just then the deep sonorous bell of the neighbouring church-clock struck the hour. The two men listened, and counted ten strokes.

"Is it time?" said the gipsy, who had completed the noose upon the second rope.

"Not yet," replied Paco; "let another hour strike. Till then not a word."

The muleteer extinguished the light, and seated himself upon the broken chair; the gipsy stretched himself upon the bed, and all was silent and dark in the garret. Gradu-

ally, the slight murmuring sounds that still issued from various houses of the little village became hushed, as the inmates betook themselves to rest; and Paco, who waited with anxious impatience till the moment for action should arrive, heard nothing but the heavy breathing of the esquilador, who had sunk into a restless slumber. Half-past ten tolled; the challenging of the sentries was heard as they were visited by the rounds; and soon afterwards came the long-drawn admonition of "*Sentinela alerta!*" from the main guard, replied to in sharp quick tones by the "*Alerta esta*" of the sentries. At length eleven struck, and when the reverberation of the last stroke had died away, Paco rose from his chair, and shook his companion from his sleep.

"It is time," said he.

The gipsy started up.

"The money—" was his first demand.

Paco placed a small bag in the esquilador's hand, which closed eagerly upon it.

"I promised you ten ounces," said the muleteer, "and you have them there. When you bring me a line in the prisoner's handwriting, dated from a Christino town, you shall receive a like sum. But beware of playing false, gitano. Others, more powerful than myself, are concerned in this affair, and know how to punish treachery."

The gipsy made no reply, but feeling for his wallet, put his sandals and one of the ropes into it, and fastened it on his shoulders. Paco slipped off his shoes, twisted the other rope round his body, and opening the door in the tiles, in an instant was on the top of the house. The esquilador followed. Upon their hands and feet the two men ascended the gradual slope of the roof till they reached the ridge in its centre, upon which they got astride, and worked them-

selves slowly and silently along towards that end of the building in which Herrera was confined. Owing to the profound darkness, and to the extreme caution with which Paco, who led the way, proceeded, their progress was very gradual, and at last an actual stop was put to it by a small but solidly-built stone chimney, which rose out of the summit, and within a foot of the extremity of the house. Paco untwisted the rope from round his body and handed it to the gipsy, retaining one end. The esquilador fixed the noose about his middle, and altering his position, passed Paco, scrambled round the chimney, and seated himself on the verge of the roof, his legs dangling over. Paco gave a turn of the rope round the chimney, and then leaning forward from behind it, put his mouth to the gipsy's ear, and spoke in one of those suppressed whispers which seem scarcely to pass the lips of the speaker.

"Remember," said he, "ten ounces, or——"

A significant motion of his hand round his throat, completed the sentence in a manner doubtless intelligible enough to the esquilador. The latter now turned about, and supported himself with his breast and arms upon the roof, his legs and the lower part of his body hanging against the side wall of the house. Paco kept his seat behind the chimney, astride as before, and gathering up the rope, held it firmly. Gradually the gipsy slid down; his breast was off the roof, then his arms, and he merely hung on by his hands. His hold was then transferred to the rope above his head, of which one end was round his waist and the other in the hands of Paco. All this was effected with a caution and absence of noise truly extraordinary, and proving wonderful coolness and habit of danger on the part of the two actors in the strange scene. As the gipsy hung suspended in the air, Paco gradually payed out the

rope, inch by inch. This process, owing to the light weight of the gipsy, and to the check given to the running of the cord by the chimney round which it was turned, he was enabled without difficulty to accomplish and regulate. In a brief space of time a sensible diminution of the strain warned him that the gitano had found additional means of support. For the space of three minutes Paco sat still, holding the rope firmly, but giving out no more of it; then pulling towards him, he found it come to his hand without opposition. He drew it all in, again twisted it about his body, and lying down upon his belly, put his head over the edge of the tiles to see what passed beneath. All was quiet; no light was visible from the window of Herrera's room, which was about a dozen feet below him. The mist and thick darkness prevented any view of the sentry; but he could hear the sound of his footsteps, and the burden of the royalist ditty which he churmed between his teeth.

Whilst all this took place, Luis Herrera, unsuspecting of the efforts making for his rescue, sat alone in his room, which was dimly lighted by an ill-trimmed lamp. Twelve hours had elapsed since he had learned the fate that awaited him; in twelve more his race would be run, and he should bid adieu to life, with its hopes and cares, its many deceptions and scanty joys. A priest, who had come to give him spiritual consolation in his last hours, had left him at sundown, promising to return the next morning; and, since his departure, Herrera had sat in one place, nearly in one posture, thoughtful and preoccupied, but neither grieving at nor flinching from the death which was to snatch him from a world whereof he had short but sad experience. Alone, and almost friendless, his affections blighted and hopes ruined, his country in a state of civil war — all con-

curred to make Herrera regard his approaching death with indifference. Life, which, by a strange contradiction, seems prized the more as its value diminishes, and clung to with far greater eagerness by the old than the young, had for him few attractions remaining. Once, and only once, a shade of sadness crept over his features, and he gave utterance to a deep sigh, almost a sob, of regret, as he drew from his breast a small locket containing a tress of golden hair. It was a gift of Rita's in their happy days, before they knew sorrow or foresaw the possibility of a separation; and from this token Herrera, even when he voluntarily renounced his claim to her hand, and bade her farewell for ever, had not had courage to part. By a strong effort he repressed the emotion which its sight, and the recollections it called up, now occasioned him, and became calm and collected as before. Drawing towards him a table, on which were writing materials, accorded to him as a last favour, he commenced a letter to Mariano Torres. This his confessor had promised should be safely conveyed.

He had written but a few lines, when a slight sound at the room window roused his attention. The noise was too trifling to be much heeded; it might be a passing owl or bat flapping its wing against the wooden shutter. Herrera resumed his writing. A few moments elapsed, and the noise was again heard. This time it was a distinct tapping upon the shutter, very low and cautious, but repeated with a degree of regularity that argued, on the part of the person making it, a desire of attracting his attention. Herrera rose from his seat, and obeying an instinct or impulse, for which he would himself have had trouble to account, masked the lamp behind a piece of furniture, and, hastening to the window, which opened inwards, cautiously unlatched it.

A man whose features were unknown to him, supported himself on the ledge outside, his legs gathered under him, and nearly the whole of his thin flexible body coiled up within the deep embrasure of the window. Putting his finger to his lips, to enjoin silence, he severed, by one blow of a keen knife, a cord that encircled his waist, and then springing lightly and actively into the room, closed the shutter, since the opening of which, so rapid had been his movements, not ten seconds had elapsed.

Although the motive of this strange intrusion was entirely unknown to him, Herrera at once inferred that it boded good rather than evil. He was not left long in doubt. The esquilador pointed to the prisoner's wounded arm, the sleeve of which was still open, although the wound was healed, and the limb had regained its strength.

"Have you full use of that?" said he.

"I have," replied Herrera. "But what is your errand?"

"To save you," answered the gipsy. "No time for words. We must be doing."

And making a sign to Herrera to assist him, he seized the heavy old-fashioned bedstead, and with the utmost caution to avoid noise, lifted it from the ground and brought it close to the window. Then, taking a rope from his wallet, he fastened it to the bed-post. Herrera began to understand.

"And my companions," said he. "They also must be saved. My room door is locked, but the next window is that of their apartment."

"Impossible," said the gipsy. "*You* may be saved, perhaps; to attempt the rescue of more would be destruction. Look here."

He extinguished the lamp, and, stepping upon the bed, reopened the shutter, and drew Herrera towards him.

"Listen," said he, in a low whisper.

The tread of the sentry was heard, and at that moment, the glare of a lantern fell upon the trees, bordering a field opposite the window. Beyond the field the ground was broken and uneven, covered with tall bushes, fern, and masses of rock, and sloping upwards towards the neighbouring hills. The light drew nearer; the sentry challenged. It was the relief. Their heads in the embrasure of the window, Herrera and the gipsy could hear every word spoken. The man going off sentry made over his instructions to his successor. They were few and short. The principal was, to fire upon any prisoner who should so much as show himself at a window.

By the light of the corporal's lantern, Paco, who still peered over the edge of the roof, distinguished the features of the new sentry. They were those of Perrico, the Christiano deserter. The relief marched away, the sentinel shouldered his musket, and walked slowly to the further end of his post.

"Now," said the gipsy to Herrera, "fix the rope round your waist. Let him pass once more, and when he again turns his back, I will lower you. I shall be on the ground nearly as soon as yourself, and then keep close to me. Take this, it may be useful."

He handed him a formidable clasp-knife, of which the curved and sharp-pointed blade was fitted into a strong horn handle. With some repugnance, but aware of the possible necessity he might find for it, Herrera took the weapon. The rope was round his waist, and, with his hands upon the embrasure of the window, he only waited to spring out for a signal from the gipsy, who watched, as well as the obscurity would permit, the movements of the soldier. The night grew lighter, the wind had risen and

swept away the mist from the fields; overhead the clouds had broken, and stars were visible, sparkling in their setting of dark blue enamel.

“Now!” said the gipsy, who held the slack of the rope gathered up in his hands. “No, stop!” cried he, in a sharp whisper, checking Herrera, who was about to jump out, and drawing hastily back. “Hell and the devil! what is he about?”

The window of the room was nearly at the extremity of the sentinel's post, so that, during one period of his walk, the soldier's back, owing to the slow pace at which he marched up and down, was turned for a full minute. It was upon this brief space of time that the gipsy calculated for accomplishing his own descent and that of his companion. He had allowed the soldier to proceed twice along the whole length of his post, meaning to avail himself of the third turn. But to his surprise and perplexity, when the man passed for the third time, he left his usual track, moved some twenty paces backwards from the house, and gazed up at Herrera's window. Apparently he could distinguish nothing; for, after remaining a few moments stationary, he again approached the wall of the house, looked cautiously around him, and, giving three low distinct coughs, continued his walk. Without pausing to consider the meaning of this strange proceeding, the esquilador caught Herrera's arm.

“Out with you,” said he, “and quickly!”

Herrera darted through the window, hung on for one instant, and let himself go—the gipsy, with a degree of strength that could hardly have been anticipated in one so slightly built, holding the rope firmly, and lowering him steadily and rapidly. The moment his feet touched the ground, the gipsy sprang out of the window, and, grasping

the rope, descended by the aid of his hands and feet, with the agility of a monkey or of a sailor boy. Before he was half-way down, however, the sentinel, who had reached the end of his walk, began to retrace his steps. Herrera's heart beat quick. Hastily cutting the noose from round his waist, he pressed himself against the wall and stood motionless, scarcely venturing to breathe. The sentinel approached. Dark though it was, it seemed impossible that he did not already perceive what was passing. Gliding along close to the wall, Herrera prepared to spring upon him at the first sound uttered, or dangerous movement made by him. The soldier drew nearer, paused, let the butt of his musket fall gently to the ground, and clasped his hands over the muzzle. Herrera bounded forward, clutched his throat, and placed the point of his knife against his breast.

"One word," said he, "and I strike!"

"At the heart of your best friend," replied the soldier, in a voice whose well-known accents thrilled Herrera's blood.

"Mariano!" he exclaimed.

"Himself," replied Mariano Torres.

Just then the gipsy, who had reached the ground, sprang upon the disguised Christino, and made a furious blow at him. Torres raised his arm, and the knife blade passed through the loose sleeve of his capote. Herrera hastened to interfere.

"'Tis a friend," said he.

The gipsy made a step backwards, in distrust and uncertainty.

"I tell you it is a friend," repeated Herrera—"a comrade of my own, come to aid my escape. And now that you have rescued me, act as our guide to the nearest Christino post, and your reward shall be ample."

The mention of reward seemed at once to remove the doubts and suspicions of the esquilador. Returning to the rope which dangled from the window, he cut it as high up as he could reach.

"They may perhaps miss the sentry and not the prisoner," said he.

At that moment a dark form turned the corner of the house.

"Who goes there?" exclaimed a voice.

"This way," cried the gipsy, and springing over the road, he dashed down a bank, and with long and rapid strides hurried across the fields.

"Who goes there?" repeated the deep hoarse tones of Major Villabuena. "Sentry, where are you? Guard, turn out!"

The flash and report of Mariano's musket, left leaning against the wall, and found and fired by Don Baltasar, followed the words of alarm. The bullet whistled over the heads of the fugitives. Instantly all was noise and confusion in the village. Drums rattled, lights appeared at the windows, the clatter of arms and tramp of man and horse reached the ears of Herrera and his companions. Soon they heard a party of cavalry gallop down a road which ran parallel to the course they took. But in the darkness, and in that wild and mountainous region, pursuit was vain, especially when one so well skilled as the gipsy in the various paths and passes, directed the flight. In less than half an hour, the three fugitives were out of sight and sound of the village and their pursuers.

After six hours' march, kept up without a moment's halt, over hill and dale, through forest and ravine, the intricacies of which were threaded by their experienced guide with as much facility as if it had been noon-day instead of dark

night, Herrera and Torres paused at sunrise upon the crest of a small eminence, whence they commanded a view of an extensive plain. On their right front, at the distance of a mile, lay a town, composed of dark buildings of quaint and ancient architecture, surrounded by walls and a moat, and on whose battlements sentries were stationed; whilst from the church tower the Spanish colours, the gaudy red and gold, flaunted their folds in the morning breeze.

“What place is that?” said Torres to the guide.

“The Christino town of Salvatierra,” replied the gipsy, turning into a path which led directly to the gate of the fortress.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

“Y asi entre otras razones le dijo que no tuviese pena del suceso de Camila, porque sin duda la herida era ligera.”—CERVANTES, *El Curioso Impertinente*.

THE unexpected and opportune appearance of Mariano Torres, at the moment of Herrera's escape, requires a few words of explanation. When Rodil, on the morrow of the skirmish with Zumalacarregui, evacuated the Lower Amezcoa, he distributed a portion of his army amongst various garrisons; and then, with the remainder, marched to Biscay in pursuit of Don Carlos, who, having as yet no place of security from his enemies, wandered about attended by a handful of followers. Amongst the troops left in Navarre by the Christino general, was the cavalry regiment to which Herrera and Torres belonged, and this was ordered to the plains of the Ebro. The day after its arrival at the town of Viana, a battalion marched in from Pampeluna, and with it came Sergeant Velasquez, who, on escaping from the Carlists, had taken refuge in that fortress. Great was the consternation of Torres when he learned the surprise of the escort and capture of his friend, and his grief was warmly sympathised in by his brother officers, with whom Herrera was a universal favourite. But Torres was not the man to content himself with idle regrets and unavailing lamenta-

tions, and he resolved to rescue Herrera, if it were possible, even at the hazard of his own life. He confided his project to the colonel of his regiment, who, with some difficulty, was induced to acquiesce, and to grant him leave of absence. This obtained, he disguised himself as a private soldier, and boldly plunged into the centre of Navarre in quest of Zumalacarregui and his army. He had little difficulty in finding them: he announced himself as a deserter from the Christinos, and, without attracting unusual notice or suspicion, was enrolled in a Navarrese battalion, which marched, a day or two afterwards, to the village where Herrera was prisoner. Although, by the interference of Count Villabuena, and the dexterity of Paco and the gipsy, Mariano's daring self-devotion was rendered superfluous, it had its uses, inasmuch as his disappearance with Herrera prevented the slightest suspicion from falling upon those who had really contrived and effected the escape. The gipsy, after guiding the friends to Salvatierra, and receiving an ample reward from Herrera, performed the secret service with which Zumalacarregui had charged him, returned to that General with a ready-framed excuse for the slight delay in its execution, and pocketed the ten additional onzas promised him by Paco. The muleteer, still weak from his wound, was the last man to be suspected; and of the Count's participation in the affair, no one, excepting Major Villabuena, for a moment dreamed. Don Baltasar, remembering his cousin's anxiety concerning Herrera, certainly entertained a notion that he had in some way facilitated his escape; but of this he had no proof, nor would it have been for his interest to expose the Count, whom he was desirous, on the contrary, to conciliate. It was a vague and undefined apprehension of some attempt at a rescue, that had led him, at so late an hour on the

night of the escape, to prowl in the vicinity of Herrera's prison.

The autumn and winter of 1834 passed away without any material change in the position of the personages of our narrative. The war continued with constantly increasing spirit and ferocity, and each month was marked by new and important successes on the part of the Carlists. The plains of Vittoria, the banks of the Ebro, the mountains of central and northern Navarre, were alternately the scene of encounters, in which the skill of Zumalacarregui, and the zeal and intrepidity of his troops, proved an overmatch for the superior numbers of the Christinos. In vain did the government of the Queen Regent, persevering in spite of its many reverses, send its best troops and most experienced generals to that corner of the Peninsula where civil strife raged ; it was only that the troops might be decimated, and the generals forfeit their former reputation, in repeated and disastrous defeats. Although the country and climate were such as to render a temporary repose in winter quarters most desirable for the contending armies, the idea of such an indulgence was scarcely for a moment entertained, and the winter campaign proved as active as the summer one. The arrival of Mina to take the chief command of the Queen's forces, and the severity of the measures he adopted, rendered the character of the war more sanguinary and cruel than it had been since its commencement ; and although, in numerous instances, the nearest relatives and dearest friends fought on contrary sides, it was impossible for them to obtain intelligence of each other's welfare. It was by no means surprising, therefore, that eight months elapsed, and the spring arrived, without Herrera hearing any thing of Count Villabuena or his daughter ; and that the Count, on the other hand,

remained ignorant of the proceedings of the young man whose life he had saved, and in whose fate he could not but feel interested, save through the occasional rumour of some dashing exploit, by which Herrera maintained and increased the high reputation he had early acquired in the ranks of the Christinos. His gallantry did not go unrewarded, and the opening of the spring campaign found him in command of a squadron, and on the road to further promotion.

Whilst Herrera thus gained fame and honour, his rival, Major Villabuena, had no reason to complain of his services being overlooked. His courage was undoubted, his military skill by no means contemptible; and these qualities procured him a colonel's commission, and a staff appointment. But, in spite of such advantages, Don Baltasar was dissatisfied and unhappy. His object in joining the Carlists had not been promotion, still less a zeal for the cause, but the appropriation to himself of the fair hand and broad lands of Rita de Villabuena. His prospect of obtaining these seemed daily to diminish. The favour with which the Count regarded him had lasted but during the first days of their acquaintance, and had since been materially impaired by the discovery of various unpleasing traits in Don Baltasar's character, and particularly by his endeavours to urge the death of Herrera in opposition to the wishes of his kinsman. Moreover, there could be little sympathy or durable friendship between men of such opposite qualities and dispositions. Count Villabuena had the feelings and instincts of a nobleman, in the real, not the conventional sense of the term: he was proud to a fault, stern, and unyielding, but frank, generous, and upright. Don Baltasar was treacherous, selfish, and unscrupulous. He felt cowed and humbled by the superiority of the Count, whom he

secretly detested; and who, whilst still keeping on good, or at least courteous, terms with his cousin, became daily more averse to his alliance, and more decided to support Rita in her rejection of his suit.

As a natural consequence of Zumalacarregui's successes, they of the Absolutist party in Spain who had openly declared for Don Carlos, and who, during the first year of the war, had been hunted from post to pillar, and frequently compelled to seek concealment in caves and forests from the pursuit of the foe, found themselves, in the spring of 1835, in possession of a considerable tract of country, including a few fortified places. *El lobo Cano*, the Grey-haired Wolf, as his followers had styled Don Carlos, in allusion to his hair having bleached on the mountain and in the bivouac, began to collect around him the semblance of a court; and various ladies, the wives and daughters of his partisans, who had been in temporary exile in France, recrossed the frontier and hazarded themselves in the immediate vicinity of the scene of war. Amongst others, Rita de Villabuena, who had resided with some friends at the French town of Pau, implored, and with difficulty obtained, her father's permission to rejoin him. A house was prepared for her reception in the small town of Segura in Guipuzcoa, whence, in case of need, a speedy retreat might be made to the adjacent sierras of Mutiloa and Aralar; and here she arrived, under her father's escort, towards the commencement of the month of May.

One of the first who hastened to pay court to the young and beautiful heiress, was, as might be expected, Colonel Baltasar de Villabuena. But his reception was in the highest degree discouraging, and he was able to assure himself, that if any variation had taken place in Rita's sentiments, it was by no means in his favour. His only remain-

ing hope, therefore, was in an appeal to the Count, whom he still believed to be, for the family reasons already adverted to, desirous of a union between Rita and himself. This appeal he resolved to take an early opportunity of making. A valuable estate, which Rita had inherited from her mother, lay within the tract of country already conquered by the Carlists ; and although the revenue it yielded was greatly diminished by the disturbed state of Navarre, and by the contributions levied for the carrying on of the war, it was still sufficiently important to excite the cupidity of Don Baltasar, and to render him doubly anxious to obtain, on any terms, the hand of his cousin.

It was on a bright May morning, three days subsequently to Rita's arrival at Segura, that a small train of horsemen wound along the declivitous paths that lead across the sierra of Elgua, a part of the northern boundary of the province of Alava. The snows with which, during the long winter, the upper portion of these mountains had been covered, had disappeared in the warm rays of the spring sun, and disclosed peaks of grey rock, and patches of table-land strewn with flints, producing little besides a few Alpine plants, which, in defiance of the scanty nourishment they found, and of the keen air that blew over those elevated summits, boldly expanded their blossoms in the pleasant sunshine. Lower down, and on that part of the southern side of the mountain over which the cavalcade now marched, masses of forest-trees sprang out of the more plentiful soil, and overshadowed the rocky path that rang under the horses' feet ; the dusky foliage of the fir-tree, the brighter green of the oak, and the broad angular leaves of the sycamore, mingling in rich variety. Now the path lay through some dry water-course, whose elevated sides, over the edges of which the tendrils of

innumerable creeping plants dangled and swung, bounded the view on either hand; whilst overhead the interwoven branches afforded, through their thick leafage, but scanty glimpses of the bright blue sky. Presently, emerging from the ravine, the road, if such it might be called, ran along the shelf of a precipice, below which successive ranges of luxuriant foliage, varied here and there by a projecting crag, or enlivened by the dash and sparkle of a waterfall continued to the level below. From the foot of the mountains, an extensive plain stretched out to a distance of several leagues, its smiling and fertile fields thickly sprinkled with villages and farm-houses. To the left front rose the old Moorish castle of Guevara; and at a greater distance, more to the westward, and near the centre of the plain, were seen the imperfect fortifications and lofty church-towers of the city of Vittoria.

The foremost of the horsemen, who, on the day referred to, thus scrambled, to the great discomfort of their steeds, down the steep and rugged sides of the sierra, avoiding, for reasons of safety, the high-road from Salinas to Vittoria, which lay at a league or two on their right, was a man of middle age and tawny complexion, mounted on a lean and uncomely, but surefooted horse, whose long tail was doubled up into a sort of club, about a foot long, and tightly bound with worsted ribands of bright and varied colours. The thick and abundant mane had been carefully plaited, with the exception of the foremost tuft, left hanging down between the ears, and from beneath which the wild eyes of the animal glanced shyly about him, pretty much as did those of the rider from under his bushy and projecting eyebrows. The horseman was dressed in a loose jacket of black sheep-skin, the wool rubbed off in many places, fastened down the front by copper clasps and chains

that had once boasted a gilding, and bound at the edges with coarse crimson velvet, which, from time and dirt, had become as dark as the principal material of the garment. Between the loose short trousers and clumsy half-boots, replacing the sandals usually worn by the person described, appeared several inches of lean and sinewy leg. A coloured handkerchief, tied round the head, and only partially covering a quantity of shaggy black hair, rusty iron spurs, with huge jingling rowels, and a well-stuffed leathern wallet slung across his body, completed the equipment of the horseman, in whom the reader will perhaps already have recognised Jaime, the gipsy esquilador, now acting as guide to the persons who followed. These consisted of Count Villabuena and his cousin, Don Baltasar, both well mounted on powerful chargers, and cloaked from chin to heel; for they had been early in the saddle, and, although now in the month of May, the morning air upon the mountains was keen and searching. They were followed, at a short distance, by an escort of forty Carlist cavalry, strange, wild-looking figures, whose scanty equipment, and the little uniformity of their clothing, might have excited the derision of better provided troops; but whose muscular forms and hardy aspect, as well as the serviceable state of their carbines and lances, gave promise of their proving efficient defenders and formidable foes.

Not bred to the profession of arms, Count Villabuena was, in a strictly military point of view, of little use to his party; but his intimate acquaintance with Navarre and the Basque provinces, with the customs, feelings, and prejudices of their inhabitants, rendered him invaluable in all administrative arrangements and combinations, and in these he cheerfully and actively exerted himself. It was on a mission of this nature that he was now proceeding, having

left Oñate early that morning to attend a meeting of influential Alavese Carlists, which was to take place at the village of Gamboa, on the north side of the plain of Vitoria. Although the country he had to traverse was not then occupied, and only occasionally visited, by the Christians, an escort was necessary; and, in addition, Colonel Villabuena had volunteered to accompany his cousin. His object in so doing was to obtain an opportunity for an uninterrupted conversation with the Count, on the subject of his pretensions to the hand of Rita.

This conversation had taken place, and its result had been most unsatisfactory to Don Baltasar. The Count plainly told him that it was not his intention to force the inclinations of his daughter; and that, as she was averse to the proposed alliance, he himself had abandoned the idea of its taking place. A long and stormy discussion ensued, and Baltasar accused the Count of having deceived him into joining a cause, whose ultimate triumph was impossible, by holding out hopes he never intended to realise. The Count replied by reminding Don Baltasar, that when he had urged him to serve his rightful monarch, and not under the banner of a usurper, the only arguments he had used were those of loyalty and duty; and that the proposed marriage was a private arrangement, entirely contingent upon his daughter's acquiescence. Sharp retorts and angry words followed, until the conversation was brought to a close by the Count's checking his horse, and allowing the escort to come up with them. The cousins then rode on, still side by side, but silent, and as far apart as the narrow path would allow; the Count haughty and indignant, Don Baltasar sullen and dogged.

Whilst this occurred in the mountains, the persons whom

Count Villabuena came to meet assembled at the place of rendezvous in the village of Gamboa. From various country lanes and roads, substantial-looking men, wrapped in heavy brown cloaks, and riding punchy mountain horses, were seen to emerge, for the most part singly, and at the careless, deliberate pace least calculated to excite suspicion of their going to other than their ordinary avocations. Some were alcaldes and regidores from the neighbouring villages, others landed proprietors in the vicinity. Now and then a lean, anxious priest, perched upon a high saddle, his feet encased in clumsy wooden stirrups, his head covered with an enormous hat, whose brim, curled up at the sides over the crown, projected a full half-yard before and behind, came ambling into the village, distributing his *benedicites* amongst the peasant women and children, who stood at the doors of the houses and bowed reverently to the *Padre Cura*. One man, dressed in the coarsest and commonest garb of a labourer, arrived upon an ill-looking mule, and received a loud and joyful welcome from the persons already assembled. He was a wealthy proprietor, whose estates lay within the Christino lines, and had been compelled to adopt this disguise to avoid notice. The arrival of another person, to all appearance a charcoal-burner, with grimy face and hands, riding a ragged pony, across which a couple of sacks, black with charcoal, were thrown by way of saddle, was hailed with similar demonstrations. He was a rich merchant and national guardsman from Vittoria, secretly well affected to Don Carlos.

The place where the Carlists first assembled was not a house, but a paved platform, extending along one side of the large church, by which it was masked from the view of persons approaching from Vittoria. A sort of cloister

with stone benches beneath it, ran along the wall, and in front of the platform was a broad greensward, used as a playground by the village children. Whilst the Carlists grouped themselves in the cloisters, talking eagerly together, and waiting the coming of Count Villabuena, their horses and ponies stood saddled and bridled upon the green, held by peasant boys, in readiness for the owners to mount and ride away at a moment's notice, or on the first signal of alarm. Of the mountain path by which the Count was expected to arrive, only about a mile was visible from the platform, after which it disappeared over the brow of a low wood-crowned eminence that rose to the north, partially intercepting the view of the sierra. On this eminence a peasant was stationed to watch for the Count; whilst on the other side of the village, at a short distance upon the Vittoria road, another vedette was posted, to give notice of the appearance of any of the foraging or reconnoitring parties which the Christinos not unfrequently sent out in this direction.

It was considerably past noon, and the members of the Junta, for such did the assembly style itself, waxed impatient for the arrival of the Count, without whom the business for which they had met could not be proceeded with, when the watcher upon the hill gave the concerted signal by waving his cap in the air, uttering at the same time one of those far-sounding cries, peculiar to the inhabitants of mountainous regions. Upon this announcement, the Carlists descended from the platform into the road that ran past one of its extremities, and took their way, with grave and dignified demeanour, to the dwelling of the priest, in which the meeting was to be held. This house, according to custom one of the most spacious and comfortable in the

village, was situated at about musket-shot from the church, and a little detached from the other buildings. Annexed to it was a long garden, bordering the road, and divided from it by a low hedge; beyond the garden was a vast and level field, and, on the eastern side of that, a tract of marshy ground, thickly covered with a lofty growth of willow and alder trees, extended to a considerable distance. The Carlists had traversed nearly the whole length of the garden hedge, and the foremost of them were close to the house, when they were startled by the loud blast of a horn, with which the peasant sentry upon the Vittoria road had been furnished, to give the alarm if needful. They simultaneously paused, and anxiously listened for a repetition of the sound. It came—a third and a fourth blast were sounded, and with such hurried vehemence as denoted pressing danger. Yet the peril could scarcely be so imminent as the quick repetition of the signal seemed to denote; for, from the place where the vedette was posted, he would command a view of any advancing troops nearly half an hour before they could reach the village, and those who had aught to fear would have ample time to effect their escape. But the horn still sounded ever louder and louder,—the Carlists gazed at each other in dismay, and some few made a movement towards their horses, as if to mount and fly. Suddenly a fat and joyous-looking alcalde, whose protuberant paunch and ruby nose were evidence of his love for the wine-skin, although the chalky tint that overspread his features at the first sound of alarm did not say much for his intrepidity, burst out into a loud laugh, which caused his companions to stare at him in some wonder and displeasure.

“By the blessed St Jago!” exclaimed he, “the idiot has

mistaken our friends for our enemies. He has been looking over his shoulder instead of before him, and has caught a sight of the Señor Conde and his escort. See yonder."

The Carlists looked in the direction pointed out, and on the top of the hill they saw three horsemen, one of whom swept the village and the adjacent country with a field-glass, apparently seeking the cause and meaning of the violent fanfare that had so much alarmed the respectable Junta. Behind these three men, who were no others than the Count, his cousin, and their guide, the lance-flags of the escort were visible, although the soldiers themselves were still out of sight, having halted just before arriving on the crest of the hill. The countenances of the Carlists, which for a moment had contracted with alarm, began again to expand, as the plausibility of their companion's explanation occurred to them; when suddenly they saw the Count and his companions turn their horses in all haste, and disappear behind the hill. At the same moment, and before they could guess the meaning of this manœuvre, a shout was heard, a troop of Christino dragoons debouched from behind the willow wood, deployed upon the field, and charged across it in open order, their lances levelled,* the pennons fluttering above their horses' ears. In less time than it takes to write it, they crossed the field, dashed into the garden, and, breaking through the hedge, clattered over the rough streets of the village in pursuit of the unfortunate priests and alcaldes. These, taken entirely by surprise, knew not where to run. Some few had time to get on horseback, and scampered off, but were pursued and overtaken by the better

* From an early period of the war, the Spanish dragoon regiments, both light and heavy, were armed with the lance, as the most efficient weapon for the mountain warfare in which they frequently engaged.

mounted dragoons ; others crept into houses and stables, or flung themselves into ditches ; and the majority, seeing no possibility of escape, threw themselves on their knees, and in piteous accents implored mercy. This was not refused.

“ Give quarter, and make prisoners,” was the command uttered in the clear, sonorous tones of Luis Herrera, who led the party ; “ they are unarmed—spare their lives.”

The order was obeyed, and only one or two of the more desperate, who produced concealed weapons, and defended themselves, received sabre-cuts from the exasperated dragoons.

But although Don Baltasar, on first obtaining a view of the Queen's cavalry, and before he knew what force approached the village, had retired behind the brow, it was by no means his intention to make a precipitate retreat without ascertaining the strength of the enemy, and endeavouring, if possible, to rescue the captive Junta. Whilst the Count and the escort retraced their steps down the hill, and halted in the fields upon its north side, whence they had the option of returning to the mountains by the way they had come, or of striking off into the high-road to Salinas and Oñate, which ran at a short distance to their right, Colonel Villabuena and the gipsy, concealed amongst the trees that clothed the summit of the eminence, watched what passed in the village. They at once saw how the surprise had occurred. The Junta had not expected an enemy by any other road than that from Vittoria, and had consequently stationed sentries in no other direction. That such would be the case, had been foreseen by the Christinos, who, having received through their spies information of the intended meeting, had sent out troops upon the Pampeluna road, with orders, after proceeding a certain distance, to strike off to the left, and, availing themselves

of the cover afforded by a large tract of wood and swamp, to take Gamboa in rear or flank. The manœuvre had been rapidly and skilfully executed; and Luis Herrera, who, with his squadron, had been sent upon this duty, arrived with half of his men within a few hundred yards of the village, before he was perceived by the Carlist vedette. His other troop he had detached to the right, that, by making a wider sweep, they might get in rear of Gamboa, and preclude the possible escape of the rebels. This detachment, ignorant of the country, and puzzled by the numerous lanes and paths which crossed each other in every direction, had lost its way, and was still at some distance when Herrera made his charge.

When Colonel Villabuena had ascertained that the number of the enemy little exceeded that of his own men, he rode out of the wood and rejoined the escort, resolved to take advantage of the Christinos being dispersed and unexpected of an attack, to make a dash at them, which, he doubted not, would be fully successful. Previously, however, and although the Count had no military rank, it was a matter of common courtesy, not to say of duty, to communicate with him, and ask his consent to dispose of an escort which had been sent for his protection. But here the sullen temper of Don Baltasar, and the rankling irritation left by his recent altercation with his kinsman, showed themselves. Followed by the gipsy, he rode to the front of the lancers, who were drawn up in line, and, without addressing a syllable to the Count, or appearing to notice his presence, gave, in a sharp abrupt tone, the necessary words of command. The men moved off. The Count, highly sensitive on matters of etiquette, and indignant at being treated by Don Baltasar as a person of no importance, unworthy of being consulted, allowed the

troop to march away without giving any indication of an intention to follow or accompany it. Don Baltasar looked round, hesitated for a moment, and then, seeing that the Count remained motionless, and took no notice of the departure of his escort, he rode back to him.

"The enemy are few," was his abrupt speech; "I shall attack them."

Count Villabuena coldly bowed his head.

"Scant measure of courtesy, Colonel," said he. "Angry feelings should not make you forget the conduct of a *caballero*."

On hearing himself thus rebuked, an expression of anger and deadly hate overspread the sombre countenance of Don Baltasar, and he scowled at the Count as though about to deal him a stab. But his eye sank beneath the calm, cold, contemptuous gaze of Count Villabuena. He said nothing; and again wheeling his charger, galloped furiously back to the head of his men, followed, at a more deliberate pace, by his cousin. Passing swiftly over a few fields, the little troop swept round the base of the hill, dashed across the level, and appeared upon the road at half a mile from the village. Don Baltasar soon saw that he was not likely to have so cheap a bargain of the Christinos as he had anticipated. Herrera had too much experience in this description of warfare to be easily surprised; and although, upon first entering Gamboa, the dragoons had unavoidably dispersed in pursuit of the fugitives, he had lost no time in reassembling them. Whilst a few men kept the prisoners already made, and searched the houses for others, he formed upon the road a party fully equal in number to that commanded by Don Baltasar. Nothing daunted, however, at finding the enemy on his guard, the Carlist colonel drew his sabre and turned to his men.

"*A ellos!*" he cried. "At them, boys, for Spain and the King!"

The lancers replied to his words by a loud hurra, and the little party advanced, at first at a moderate pace, not to blow the horses before the decisive moment should arrive. The Count, forgetting private animosity in the excitement and exhilaration of the moment, rode cheerfully at the side of his cousin, and drew the sword which, although a civilian, the perilous and adventurous life he led induced him invariably to carry. At the same moment Herrera's trumpeter sounded the assembly, and those of the dragoons who had dismounted hurried to their horses. But before the distance between the opposite parties had been diminished by many yards, the blast of the Christino trumpet was replied to by another, and, upon looking back, Don Baltasar saw a fresh party of dragoons just appearing upon the road, about a mile in his rear. It was the second troop of Herrera's squadron coming to the support of their leader.

"Curse and confound them!" cried Baltasar, his face darkening with rage and disappointment. "Halt—files about! And now, boys, legs must do it, for they are three to one."

And he led the way back into the fields, followed by his men at a rapid pace, but in good order.

Without a moment's delay, Herrera dashed across the country in pursuit of the Carlists. His example was followed by Torres, who commanded the other detachment. The fugitives had a good start, and were soon behind the hill; but the Christino horses were fresher, and although less accustomed to climb the mountains, in the plain they were swifter of foot. Don Baltasar, now riding in rear of his men, cast a glance over his shoulder.

"They gain on us," said he, in a low tone, and as if to

himself. "Impossible to reach the sierra. If we could, we were safe. There are positions we could hold on foot with our carbines, where they would not dare attack us."

"We shall never reach them," said the Count. "Let us turn and fight whilst yet there is time."

"The bridge! the bridge!" cried the gipsy, who, notwithstanding the gaunt appearance of his steed, had kept well up with the soldiers. "Quick! To the bridge! A child might pull it down."

"Right, by God!" cried Baltasar, glancing in some surprise at the adviser of an expedient which he had himself overlooked. "Spur, men! spur; but keep together."

Again the rowels ploughed the flanks of the straining, panting horses, and the Carlists rapidly neared a small river, which, rising in some of the adjacent mountains, flowed in rear of the little hill already referred to, and parallel to the sierra whence Count Villabuena and his companions had recently descended. The land, for some distance on either side the stream, was uncultivated, covered with furze and yellow broom, and sprinkled with trees and clumps of high bushes. Across the river, only a few months previously, a rude but solid stone bridge had afforded a passage; this bridge had been broken down soon after the commencement of the war, and the water, which, although not more than seven or eight yards broad, was deep, and had steep high banks, was now traversed by means of four planks, laid side by side, and barely wide enough to give passage to a bullock cart. Over this imperfect and rickety causeway, the retreating Carlists galloped, the boards bending and creaking beneath their horses' feet. When all had passed, Don Baltasar flung himself from his saddle, grasped the planks, and, aided by the gipsy and by several of his men, who had also dismounted, strove, by main strength,

to tear their extremities from the clay in which they were embedded. The Christinos, who were within a couple of hundred yards of the river, set up a shout of fury, on perceiving the intention of their enemies. By the sinewy hands of Baltasar and his soldiers, three of the boards were torn from the earth and flung into the stream. The fourth gave way as Herrera came up, the first man of his party, and, regardless of the narrow footing, was about to risk the perilous voyage. Violently curbing his horse, he but just escaped falling headlong into the stream. A shout of exultation from the Carlists, and the discharge of several carbines, greeted the disappointed Christinos, who promptly returned the fire; whilst, as was usual when they came within earshot, the complimentary epithets of "Sons of Priests," and, "*Soldados de la Puta*," accompanied by volleys of imprecations, were bandied between the hostile parties.

"Is there a bridge or ford at hand?" said Baltasar hastily to the gipsy.

"None within a quarter of a league," was the reply.

"Then we will have a shot at them."

Herrera and Count Villabuena were again opposed to each other, and each acknowledged the other's presence by a brief smile of recognition.

A smart skirmish now began. All was smoke, noise, and confusion. The Count rode up to his cousin, who was on the right of his men.

"Let us retire," said he. "No advantage can be gained by this idle skirmishing. Infantry may be at hand, and delay will endanger our retreat."

"Not so fast," replied Baltasar; "we will empty a few saddles before we go."

"The escort was sent for my safety," said the Count,

haughtily. "You are not doing your duty in thus risking it."

"I have not been twenty years a soldier to learn my duty from you, sir," said Baltasar, fiercely. "Aim at the officers, men. A doubloon for him who picks off the captain."

Stimulated by the promised reward, several of the Carlists directed their fire at Herrera, who was on the left of the dragoons, opposite to Don Baltasar. The bullets flew thick around him, but none took effect, and Baltasar himself drew a pistol from his holster to take aim at his opponent. Disgusted at his cousin's intemperate speech and imprudent conduct, the Count turned contemptuously from him, and approached the stream, regardless that by so doing he brought himself into a cross fire of friends and foes.

"This is useless, Herrera," said he; "draw off your men."

Scarcely had the words left his lips, when his hand relinquished its hold of the bridle, with a convulsive movement he threw himself back in the saddle, and fell heavily to the ground, struck by a ball. A cry of horror from Luis was echoed by one of consternation from the Carlists, on witnessing the fall of a man whom they all loved and respected.

"Where can we cross the stream?" demanded Herrera of a sergeant who knew the country.

"To our left there is a ford, but at some distance."

"Cease firing," cried Herrera.

The trumpet sounded the necessary call, and the Christians started at a gallop in the direction of the ford. Don Baltasar advanced to the spot where his cousin lay prostrate. Count Villabuena lay upon his back, his teeth set, his eyes wide open and fixed, his clenched hands full of earth and grass. Baltasar turned away with a slight shudder.

"He is dead," said he, to the subaltern of the escort. "To take the body with us, would impede our retreat, already difficult enough. The living must not be endangered for the sake of the dead. Forward, men!"

And, without further delay, the Carlists set off at a brisk pace towards the mountains, which they reached before the Christinos had found and passed the distant ford. When the dragoons arrived at the foot of the sierra, Don Baltasar and his men were already out of sight amongst its steep and dangerous paths; and Herrera, compelled to abandon the pursuit, returned mournfully to the river bank, to seek and convey to Vittoria the body of Count Villabuena.

Leaving Herrera to his mournful duty, we introduce the reader into the principal apartment of a house on the outskirts of the town of Segura. The interior, plainly but commodiously furnished, indicated feminine tastes and occupations, and breathed that perfume of elegance which the presence of woman ever communicates. Vases of flowers decked the sideboards; a few books, the works of the best Spanish poets, lay upon the table; and a guitar, unstrung, it is true, was suspended against the wall. Two persons occupied the room. One of them, seated on a low stool at its inner extremity, near to the folding-doors that separated it from an antechamber, was a robust, ruddy-cheeked Navarrese girl, whose abundant hair, of which the jet blackness atoned for the coarse texture, hung in a thick plait down her back, and whose large red fingers were busily engaged in knitting. At the other end of the apartment, close to the open window, through which she intently gazed, was a being of very different mould. On a high-backed elbow-chair of ancient oak sat Rita de Villabuena, pensive and anxious, her fair face and golden tresses seeming yet fairer and brighter from contrast with the dark quaint carving

against which they reposed. Her cheek was perhaps paler than when first we made her acquaintance ; anxiety for her lover, and, latterly, for her father, was the cause ; but her beauty had lost nothing by the change. The shade of melancholy upon her features, by adding to the interest her expressive countenance inspired, rather enhanced than diminished its charm. She was watching for her father, who had led her to expect his return about this time. Over the stone balustrade of her balcony, she commanded a view of the high-road ; and upon the farthest visible point of it, where a bend round a group of trees concealed its continuation, her gaze was riveted. Although the Count had assured her, before his departure, that his journey was unattended with risk, Rita's arrival upon the scene of war was too recent for her to be quite easy during his absence. Some hours before the time at which his return could reasonably be looked for, she had taken her post at the window ; and although, at the persuasion of her attendant, a simple country girl, recently installed as her *doncella*, she had more than once endeavoured to fix her attention on a book, or to distract it by some of her usual occupations, the effort had each time been made in vain, and she had again resumed her anxious watch. In each horseman or muleteer who turned the angle of the road, she thought she recognised the guide, who, two days previously, had accompanied her father from Segura, and her heart throbbed with a feeling of joyful relief till a nearer approach convinced her of her error.

Could the vision of Rita de Villabuena have penetrated the copse that bounded her view in that direction, she would have perceived, towards four of the afternoon, not her father, alas ! but another horseman, attended by the gipsy guide, riding at a rapid pace along the road. On

reaching the trees, they deviated from the track into a lane enclosed between hedges, which led round the town and again joined the road on its further side. To explain this manœuvre, we must retrace our steps, and follow the movements of Colonel Villabuena after his return to Oñate on the preceding evening.

When the first excitement of the skirmish and subsequent flight had subsided, and the detachment of Carlists, after giving their horses a moment's breathing-time upon one of the higher levels of the sierra, resumed their march at a more leisurely pace, the thoughts of Don Baltasar became concentrated on the one grand object of deriving the utmost possible advantage from his cousin's death. By that event the Villabuena estates were now his own, those, at least, that lay within the Carlist territory. These, however, were comparatively of little value; and although the far more extensive ones, confiscated by the Queen's government, might possibly be redeemed by a prompt abjuration of the cause of Don Carlos, a measure at whose adoption Don Baltasar was by no means so scrupulous as to hesitate, yet even that would not fully satisfy him. He had other views and wishes. As far as his selfish nature could entertain such a feeling, he was deeply in love with Rita; her coldness had only served to stimulate his passion; and he was bent upon making her his at any price, and by any means. He was sufficiently acquainted with her character to feel sure that his prospect of obtaining her hand was any thing but improved by her father's death; and that, to her, the wealthy possessor of her family's estates would be as unwelcome a wooer as the needy soldier of fortune. He did not doubt but that, after the first violence of her grief had subsided, she would return to France, where relatives of her mother dwelt; and that when next

he heard of her, it would be as the bride of his fortunate rival. The picture thus conjured up made him to gnash his teeth with fury ; and he swore to himself a deep oath that she should be his at any risk, even though the boldest and most unscrupulous measures were necessary for that consummation. A plan occurred to him which he thought could not fail of success, and by which the obstinacy of the self-willed girl must, he believed, be overcome. It was a hazardous scheme, even in that unsettled and war-ridden country, where men were too much occupied in party strife to attend to the strict administration of justice ; but Baltasar lacked not resolution, and the prize was worth the peril. One thing he wanted ; a bold and quick-witted confederate, and him it was not so easy to find. No man had fewer friends in his own class than Don Baltasar, and by his inferiors he was generally detested on account of his harsh and overbearing demeanour. This he knew ; and he vainly racked his brain to find a man in whom he could confide. The details of his nefarious project were already arranged in his mind, and only this one difficulty had still to be overcome ; when, at two hours after dark, he entered the streets of Oñate. Hopeless of being served for affection's sake, he was meditating whom he could make his own by bribery, when a light from an open window flashed across the street, and illuminated the unprepossessing profile of Jaime the gipsy, who, in his capacity of guide, rode in front of the party, and a little on one side of Colonel Villabuena. The sight of those sinister features, on which rapacity and cunning had set their stamp, was as a sudden revelation to Don Baltasar, to whom it instantly occurred that the gitano was the very man he sought. The circumstance of his belonging to a race despised, and almost persecuted, by the people amongst whom they dwelt, was an additional gua-

antee against any compunctious scruples on his part; his occupation of a spy bespoke him at once daring and venal, and Colonel Villabuena doubted not that he should find him a willing and useful instrument.

The soldiers filed off to their quarters; and Baltasar, desiring the gipsy to come to him in an hour's time, betook himself to the posada. When Jaime had given his horse an ample feed, and groomed him with a care that showed the value he set upon his services, he made a hasty meal in the neighbouring wine-house, and repaired to the Colonel's quarters. His stealthy tap at the door was answered by an impatient "*adelante*," and he entered the room.

A scarcely tasted supper was upon the table, and Don Baltasar paced the apartment, his brow knit, and deep in thought. On beholding the gipsy, he arranged his features into their most amiable expression, and advanced towards him with an assumed air of frank good-humour.

"I have to thank you, Jaime," said he, "for your promptness and presence of mind this morning. Had you not remembered what we all forgot, and suggested the pulling down of the bridge, few of us would have seen Donate to-night. I shall report your conduct favourably to the General, who will doubtless reward it."

The esquilador slightly bowed his head, but, with the exception of that movement, made no reply; nor did any expression of satisfaction at the praise bestowed upon him brighten up his dark countenance.

"Meanwhile," continued Don Baltasar, "I shall discharge my personal obligation to you in a more solid manner than by mere thanks."

And he held out a handful of dollars, which the next instant disappeared in one of Jaime's capacious pockets.

This time a muttered word of thanks escaped the lips of the taciturn esquilador.

"Whither do you now proceed?" inquired Baltasar.
"Do you rejoin the General? What are your orders?"

"I am no man's servant," replied the gipsy, "and have no orders to obey. When your General requires my services, we make a bargain—I to act, he to pay. I risk my life for his gold, and if I deceive him I know the penalty. But the service once rendered, I am my own man again."

"So then," said Baltasar, "you are not bound to Zumalacarregui; and should others offer you better pay for lighter service, you are free to take it?"

"That's it," replied the gipsy.

There was a short pause, during which Colonel Villabuena attentively scanned the countenance of Jaime, who remained impassible, and with eyes fixed upon the ground, as though to prevent their expression from being read. Baltasar resumed:—

"Say, then, that I were to ensure you a large reward for the performance of services far less dangerous than those you daily render at a less price, would you accept or refuse the offer?"

"I must know *what* I am to do, and what to get," said the gipsy, this time raising his eyes to Don Baltasar's face.

"Can you be silent?" said Baltasar.

"When I am paid for it—as the grave," was the reply.

"In short, if I understand you rightly," said the Colonel with an easy smile, "you will do any thing at a price."

"Any thing," returned the unabashed gipsy. "It is not a small risk that will frighten me, if the reward is proportionate."

"We shall suit one another charmingly," said Baltasar.

“What I require will expose you to little danger. Your reward shall be of your own fixing.”

And, without further preamble, he proceeded to unfold to the gipsy the outline of a scheme requiring his co-operation, the nature of which will best be made known to the reader by the march of subsequent events.

The sinking sun and rapidly lengthening shadows proclaimed the approach of evening, and Rita de Villabuena, still seated at her window, watched for her father's arrival, when the trot of a horse, which stopped at the door of the house, made her start from her seat, and hurry to the balcony. Her anxiety was converted into lively alarm when she saw the Count's gipsy guide alight alone from his horse; a presentiment of evil came over her, — she staggered back into the room, and sank, almost fainting, upon a chair. Recovering herself, however, she was hurrying to the door of the apartment, when it opened, and Paco, the muleteer, who had lately been attached to her father as orderly, and whom the Count had left as a protection to his daughter, made his appearance.

“The gipsy is here, Señora,” said he: “he brings news of his Excellency the Conde.”

“Admit him instantly,” cried Rita impatiently. “Where did you leave my father?” she inquired, as the esquilador entered the room. “Is he well? Why does he not return?”

“I left the Señor Conde at a convent near Lecumberri,” replied the gipsy.

“Near Lecumberri?” repeated Rita; “it was not in that direction that he went. He left this for the plains of Vittoria.”

“He did so, Señora,” answered the gipsy; “but before we were half-way to Oñate, we were met by a courier

with despatches for his Señoria, who immediately turned bridle, and ordered the escort to do the same. It was past midnight when we again reached Segura. Not to cause alarm, we marched round the town, and continued our route without stopping."

"And your errand now?" exclaimed Rita. The gipsy hesitated before replying.

"The Señor Conde is wounded," said he at last.

"Wounded!" repeated Rita, in the shrill accents of alarm. "You deceive me—they have killed him! Oh, tell me all! Say, is my father still alive?"

And, clasping her hands, she seemed about to throw herself at the feet of Jaime, whilst her anxious glance strove to read the truth upon his countenance. Strange was the contrast presented by that lovely and elegant creature and the squalid, tawny gipsy; an angel supplicating some evil spirit, into whose power she had fallen, might so have looked.

"The Señor Conde's wound is severe," said Jaime. "On his way yesterday afternoon to attend a meeting of the Navarrese Junta in the valley of Lanz, he fell in with a party of Christino cavalry. His escort repulsed them, but he himself received a hurt in the skirmish."

"My father wounded and suffering!" exclaimed Rita in grievous agitation, passing her hand over her forehead like one bewildered by some stunning and terrible intelligence. "I will go to him instantly. Quick, Paco, the mules! Micaela, my mantilla! We must set out at once."

The servants hurried to obey the orders of their mistress, and prepare for instant departure. The gipsy was about to follow, when Rita detained him, and overwhelmed him with questions concerning her father's state, to all of which Jaime replied in a manner that somewhat tranquillised her

alarm, although it produced no change in her resolution to set off immediately to join him. This, indeed, the esquilador informed her, was her father's wish, as he found that he should be detained some time in his present quarters by the consequences of his wound.

Although all haste was used in the needful preparations, the sun touched the horizon before Rita and her attendants left Segura, and took the road to Lecumberri; at about two leagues from which, as Jaime told them, and in the heart of the sierra, was situated the convent that was their destination. The distance was not great; but, owing to the mountains, the travellers could hardly expect to reach the end of their journey much before daybreak. Paco, who viewed this hasty departure with any thing but a well-pleased countenance, urged Rita to postpone it till the following morning, alleging the difficult nature of the roads they must traverse, which led for a considerable part of the way over a steep and trackless sierra. But Rita's anxiety would brook no delay, and the little cavalcade set out. It consisted of Rita and her waiting-maid, mounted upon mules, and of the gipsy and Paco upon their horses; Paco leading a third mule, upon which, by the care of Micaela, a hastily packed portmanteau had been strapped. The gipsy rode in front; thirty paces behind him came the women, and the muleteer brought up the rear. Jaime had betrayed some surprise, and even discomposure, when he found Paco was to accompany them; but he did not venture to object to so natural an arrangement.

Taking advantage of the goodness of the road, for the first league or two tolerably smooth and level, the travellers pushed on for nearly two hours at a steady amble, which, could it have been sustained, would have brought them to their journey's end much sooner than was really to

be the case. The sun had set, the moon had not yet risen, and the night was very dark. Jaime, who still maintained a short interval between his horse and the mules of Rita and her attendant, shifted his restless glances from side to side, as though he would fain have penetrated the surrounding gloom. He was passing a thicket that skirted the road, when a cautious "Hist!" inaudible to his companions, arrested his attention. He immediately pulled up his horse, and, dismounting, unstrapped the surcingle of his saddle. Rita stopped to inquire the cause of the delay, but the gipsy requested her to proceed.

"My horse's girths are loose, Señora," said he in explanation. "Be good enough to ride on, and I will overtake you immediately."

Rita rode on, and Paco followed, without paying any attention to so common an occurrence as the slackening of a girth. Scarcely, however, had he passed the gipsy some fifty paces, when the latter left his horse, who remained motionless in the middle of the road, and approached the thicket. Just within the shadow of the foremost trees, a man on horseback, muffled in a cloak, was waiting. It was Colonel Villabuena.

"All is well," said the gipsy. "You have only to ride forward and prepare for our reception."

"Who is with you?" said Don Baltasar, in a dissatisfied tone.

"The lady and her doncella, and Paco, her father's orderly."

"Fool!" cried Baltasar; "why did you bring him? His presence may ruin my plan."

"How could I help it?" retorted Jaime. "If I had objected he would have suspected me. He's as cunning as a fox, and did not swallow the story half as well as his

mistress. Her impatience decided it. Nothing would serve her but setting out immediately."

"He must be disposed of," said Baltasar. "There's many a mountain precipice between this and our destination," he added meaningly.

Jaime shook his head.

"I *might* do it," said he; "but if I failed, and he is a wary and active fellow, the chances are that he would do the same kind office for me, and return with the lady."

"Humph!" said Baltasar. "Well, he shall be cared for. And now ride on. I shall reach the convent an hour before you. Remember to take the longest road."

The gipsy nodded, returned to his horse, and, springing lightly into the saddle, galloped after his companions. Don Baltasar remained for a short time in the thicket, and then emerging, followed Rita and her party at a deliberate pace. From time to time he stopped, and listened for the sound of their horses' footsteps. If he could hear it, he halted till it became inaudible, and then again moved on. His object evidently was to keep as near to the travellers as he could without allowing his proximity to be suspected.

It was nearly midnight, and Rita and her companions had been for some time amongst the mountains, when they reached a place where the road, or rather track, split and branched off in two different directions. Jaime, who, since they had entered the sierra, had abridged the distance between himself and his companions, and now rode just in front of Rita's mule, turned into the right hand path, when Paco called out to him that the left was the shortest and best.

"You are mistaken," said Jaime abruptly, continuing in the direction he had first taken.

But Paco was not to be put off in so unceremonious a

manner. "I tell you," said he, riding up to the gipsy, "that I know this country well, and the left-hand road is the one to take."

"How long since you travelled it?" inquired Jaime.

"Only last autumn," was the reply, "and then for the twentieth time."

"Well," said the esquilador, "it may be the shortest; but if you had ridden along it this morning, as I did, you would hardly call it the best. The winter rains have washed away the path, and left the bare rocks so slippery and uneven, that I could scarce get my horse over them in daylight, and by night I should make sure to break his legs and my own neck."

"I know nothing of this convent you are taking us to," said Paco, in a sulky tone; "but if it stands, as you tell me, to the north of Lecumberri, this road will lengthen our journey an hour or more."

"Scarcely so much," said Jaime. "At any rate," added he doggedly, "it is I who answer to the Count for the Señora's safety, and I shall take the road I think best."

An angry reply was on Paco's lips, but Rita interfered, and the gipsy had his own way. Three minutes later, Don Baltasar arrived at the division of the roads, paused, listened; and heard the faint echo of the horses' hoofs upon the right-hand path. With an exclamation of satisfaction, he struck his spurs into the flanks of his steed, and at a rapid pace ascended the contrary road, the shortest, and, as Paco had truly asserted, by far the best, to the convent whither Rita de Villabuena was proceeding.

Over rocks and through ravines, and along the margin of precipices, Don Baltasar rode, threading, in spite of the darkness, the difficult and often dangerous mountain-paths, with all the confidence of one well acquainted with their

intricacies. At last, after a long descent, he entered a narrow valley, or rather a mountain-gorge, extending in the form of nearly a semicircle, and for a distance of about four miles, between two steep and rugged lines of hill. Once upon level ground, he spurred his horse, and passing swiftly over the dew-steeped grass of a few fields, entered a beaten track that ran along the centre of the valley. The moon was now up, silvering the summits of the groups of trees with which the narrow plain was sprinkled, and defining the gloomy peaks of the sierra against the star-spangled sky. By its light Don Baltasar rode rapidly along, until, arriving near the further end of the valley, he came in sight of an extensive edifice, beautifully situated on the platform of a low hill, and sheltered to the north and east by lofty mountains. The building was of grey stone, and formed three sides of a square; the side at right angles with the two others being considerably the longest, and the wings connected by a wall of solid masonry, in whose centre was an arched portal. In front, and on one side of the convent, for such, as a single glance was sufficient to determine, was the purpose to which the roomy structure was appropriated, the ground was bare and open, until the platform sank towards the plain; and then the sunny southern slope had been turned to the best account. Luxuriant vineyards, a plantation of olive trees, and a large and well-stocked orchard covered it, whilst the level at its foot was laid out in pasture and corn fields. The space between the back of the convent and the mountains was filled up by a thick wood, affording materials for the blazing fires which, in winter time, the keen airs from the hills would render highly acceptable. The forest also extended round and close up to the walls of the right wing

of the building. From the roof of the left wing rose a lofty open tower, where was seen hanging the ponderous mass of bronze by whose sonorous peal the pious inmates were summoned to their devotions.

Urging his horse up the steep and winding path that led to the front of the convent, Don Baltasar pulled a chain that hung beside the gate. The clank of a bell immediately followed, and Baltasar, receding a little from the door, looked up at the windows. No light was visible at any of them: profound stillness reigned. After a short delay, the impatient Carlist again rang, and he was about to repeat the summons for a third time, when a faint gleam of light in the court warned him that some one was afoot. Presently a small wicket in the centre of the gate was opened, and the lay sister who acted as portress showed her pinched and crabbed features at the aperture. In a voice rendered unusually shrill and querulous by vexation at this disturbance of her slumbers, she demanded who thus broke the rest of the sisterhood.

"I come," said Baltasar, "to speak with your abbess, Doña Carmen de Forcadell, upon matters of the utmost importance. Admit me instantly; for my business presses."

"The lady abbess," peevishly returned the portress, "cannot be spoken with before matins. If you wait till then, I will tell her you are here, and she will perhaps see you."

"I must see her at once," replied Baltasar, waxing wroth at this delay, when every moment was of importance to his projects. "Tell her it is Don Baltasar, and she will give orders to admit me."

Whilst he spoke, the lay-sister raised her glimmering lantern to the wicket, to take a survey of this peremptory

applicant for admission. The view of his features apparently did not greatly impress her in his favour, or at any rate did not dispose her to open the solid barrier between them.

"Baltasar or Benito," cried she, "it is all one to Mariquita. You may wait till the matin bell rings. Fine times, indeed, when every thieving guerilla thinks to find free quarters where he lists! No, no, Señor! stay where you are; the fresh air will cool your impatience. It will be daybreak in an hour, and that will be time enough for your errand, whatever it is."

With no small difficulty did Don Baltasar restrain his spleen during the old woman's harangue. When it came to a close, however, and he saw that she persisted in leaving him outside the gate till the usual hour for opening it, he lost all patience. Before she could shut the wicket, close to which she stood, he thrust in his hand and arm, and grasped her by her skinny throat. The lay-sister set up a yell of alarm and pain.

"Jesus Maria! *Al socorro!* Help, help!" screamed she; the last words dying away in a gurgling sound, as Don Baltasar tightened his hold upon her windpipe.

"Silence, you old jade!" cried the fierce soldier in a suppressed tone, "you will alarm the whole convent. You have the keys in your hand—I heard them clank. Open the gate instantly, or by all the saints in heaven, I throttle you where you stand."

The increased pressure of his fingers warned the old woman that he would keep his word; and, yielding to so novel and convincing a mode of argument, she made use of the keys whose jingle she had imprudently allowed to be heard. Two heavy locks shot back, and a massive bar was withdrawn; and when Don Baltasar had convinced

himself that the gate was open, he released the gullet of the trembling sister, and entered the paved court. In grievous trepidation the portress was retreating to her lodge, which stood just within the gate, when an upper window of the convent opened, and a female voice inquired, in commanding tones, the cause of the uproar. Don Baltasar seemed to recognise the voice, and he rode beneath the window whence it proceeded.

"Carmen," said he, "is it you?"

"Who is that?" was the rejoinder, in accents which surprise or alarm rendered slightly tremulous.

"Baltasar," replied the officer. "I must see you instantly, on a matter of life or death."

There was a moment's pause. "Remain where you are," said the person at the window; "I will descend."

The portress, finding that the intruder was known to the lady abbess, for she it was whom Baltasar had addressed as Carmen, now refastened the gate, and crept grumbling to her cell. Don Baltasar waited. Presently a door in the right wing of the convent opened: a tall female form, clothed in flowing drapery, and carrying a taper in her hand, appeared at it and beckoned him to enter. Leaving his horse, he obeyed the signal.

The room into which, after passing through a corridor, Colonel Villabuena was now introduced, was one of those appropriated to the reception of visitors. The apartment was plainly furnished with a table and a few wooden chairs; in a recess hung a large ebony crucifix, before which was placed a hassock, its cloth envelope worn threadbare by the knees of the devout. But if the room of itself offered little worthy of note, the case was far different with the person who now ushered Don Baltasar into it. This was a woman about forty years old, possessed

of one of those marked and characteristic physiognomies which painters are fond of attributing to the inhabitants of southern Europe. Her age was scarcely to be read upon her face, whose slight furrows seemed traced by violent passions rather than by the hand of time: she had the remains of great beauty, although wanting in the intellectual; and the expression of her face, her compressed lips, and the fixed look of her eyes, went far to neutralise the charm which her regular features, and the classic oval of her physiognomy, would otherwise have had. The outline of her tall figure was veiled, but not concealed, by her monastic robe, from whose loose sleeves her long, thin, white hands protruded. Closing the door, she seated herself beside a table, upon which she reposed her elbow, and motioned her visitor to a chair. A slight degree of agitation was perceptible in her manner, as she waited in silence for Don Baltasar to communicate the motive of his unseasonable arrival. This he speedily did.

"You must do me a service, Carmen," said he. "My cousin Rita is now within an hour's ride of this place. She comes hither expecting to find her father. She must be detained captive."

"How!" exclaimed the abbess, "is your suit so hopeless as to render such hazardous measures advisable? What will you gain by such violence? Her father will inevitably seek and discover her; disgrace and disappointment will be the sole result of your mad scheme."

"Her father," replied Baltasar gloomily, "will give us no trouble."

"How?—no trouble! If all be true that I have heard of Count Villabuena, and of his affection for his only surviving child, he will devote his life to the search for her."

"Count Villabuena," said Baltasar, "now stands before you. The father of Rita is dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed the abbess with a start. "How and when did he die?"

"He was shot in a skirmish."

"In a skirmish!" repeated Doña Carmen. "He held no military command."

"I escorted him with a few men to attend a Junta. We were attacked by a superior force, from which we escaped, thanks to an intervening river. A few shots were exchanged, the Count thrust himself into the fire, and fell."

The abbess cast down her eyes, as if in reflection, and then again raising them, fixed a keen and searching look upon the countenance of Baltasar.

"Was your loss in men severe?" said she abruptly.

"No—yes—" replied Baltasar, somewhat confused. "I believe there were several wounded. Why do you ask?"

"And the Count's death gives you the Villabuena estates?"

"It does so," answered Baltasar.

The dark penetrating eyes of the abbess still remained fixed, with a peculiar expression of inquiry and suspicion, upon the countenance of Colonel Villabuena. He tried to sustain their gaze, but was unable. He looked down, and a slight paleness came over his features.

"I am not here to answer questions," said he, with a rough brutality of manner which seemed assumed to veil embarrassment. "My plan is arranged, but promptness of execution is essential to its success. Rita must be detained here, where none will seek her, till she becomes my wife. Your power in this place is unlimited, your word law; you can seclude her in some corner where none

shall see her but those in whom you fully confide. Make the necessary preparations. Each moment she may arrive."

Whilst Baltasar spoke, Doña Carmen remained with her brow supported on her hand, silent and sunk in reflection. She now sprang impetuously from her chair.

"I will have naught to do with it," cried she; "you would entangle me in a labyrinth of crime, whence the only issue would be ignominy. Find others to aid you in your machinations."

In his turn Baltasar left his seat, and, approaching the abbess, led her back to her chair.

"Carmen," said he, in a suppressed voice, and from between his set teeth, "is it to me that you say 'I will not'?—Carmen," he continued, speaking low, and with his face very near to hers, "there was a time when, for love of you and to do your bidding, I feared nothing, shrunk from no punishment here or hereafter. Have you already forgotten it? 'I hate him,' were your words, as I sat at your feet in yon sunny Andalusian bower—'I hate him, and in proportion to my hatred shall be my gratitude to him who rids me of his odious presence.' That night the *serenos* found the body of Don Fernando de Forcadell stiff and cold upon the steps of his villa. He had had a dispute at the *monté* table, and two men were sent to Ceuta on suspicion of the deed. Only two persons knew who had really done it. Ha! Carmen, only two persons!"

During this terrible recapitulation, the abbess sat motionless as a statue, for which, indeed, in her white robe, and with her marble-pale complexion, she might almost have been taken. She covered her face with her hands, and her bosom heaved so violently, that the loose folds of drapery which shrouded it rose and fell like the waves of a troubled ocean. When Baltasar ceased speaking, she removed her

hands, and exhibited a countenance livid as that of a corpse. Her almost preternatural paleness, the dark furrows under her eyes, and the tension of every feature, added ten years to her apparent age.

"Is that all?" she said, in a hollow voice, to her tormentor.

"And one of those persons," resumed the pitiless Baltasar, "swore by earth and by heaven, and by the God who made them both, never to forget the service that I—that the other person, I would say—had rendered her, and to be ready to requite it whenever he should point out the way. Years have flown by since that day, and the feelings that united those two persons have long since changed; but a promise made as that one was—a promise sealed with blood—can never pass away till it has been redeemed. Carmen, I claim its fulfilment."

Baltasar paused.

"Fiend!" exclaimed the abbess, "what would you of me?"

"I have already told you," said Villabuena. "It is no crime, nothing that need alarm your conscience, recently grown so tender; but a good deed, rather, since it prevents the daughter of a noble house from throwing herself into the arms of an adventurer and a rebel, and gives her hand to him for whom her father destined it. She is as yet unaware of the Count's death. She will learn it here, and no place fitter. Your pious consolations will soothe her grief. I shall leave her in your guardianship, and when the first violence of her sorrow is over, I shall easily find means to overcome her puerile objections to my suit. But I am a fool," exclaimed he, interrupting himself, "to lose in idle talk time that is so precious! They must already be in sight of the convent. Lead me to a window whence we may

observe their approach, and whilst watching for it we can make our final arrangements."

He took the hand of the abbess, and she led the way, mechanically, to the door of an inner room. Passing through two other apartments, they reached one at the extremity of the wing, whence a view was obtained for a considerable distance down the valley. The prospect that presented itself to them on pausing before the window, was so enchantingly beautiful, that it seemed to produce an effect, and to exercise a softening influence, even upon the depraved and vicious nature of Don Baltasar. At any rate, a full minute elapsed during which he stood in silence and contemplation.

The view afforded by the valley, upon that pleasant May morning, was indeed of almost unparalleled loveliness. The sun, which had already risen behind the eastern hills, but not yet surmounted them, threw its first rays across their summits, and illumined the opposite mountains, bathing their pinnacles in a golden glow, whilst their lower steeps remained in comparative darkness. In the depths of the vale the last shades of twilight still lingered, and masses of thin grey vapour rolled in billows over the rich vegetation and vivid verdure of the fields. The most fantastic variety of form was exhibited by the surrounding mountain wall; here it rose in turrets and towers, there spread out in crags, then again fell in blank abrupt precipices, their edges fringed with shrubs, the recesses of their sides sheltering wild flowers of varied hues, whose sprays and blossoms waved in the sweet breath of morning. Equally varied, and as delicately beautiful, were the ethereal tints of the mountain tops, to which the cloudless sky seemed to impart a tinge of its azure. On the edge of a ravine, midway up a mountain, were seen a few crumb-

ling walls, and a fragment of a broken tower, sole remains of some ancient stronghold, which, centuries before, had frowned over the vale. The hut of a goat-herd or charcoal-burner, here and there dotted the hill-side; and at the southern limit of the valley, just before its change of direction took it out of sight of the convent, were visible the houses of a small hamlet, surrounded by plantations, and half buried amidst blossoms of tenderest rose colour and dazzling white. Masses of beech and ilex clothed the lower slopes of the mountains, and from their dark setting of foliage the grey walls of the Dominican convent rose like a shadowy spectre. The fresh brightness of spring was the characteristic of the whole scene; the year rejoiced in its youthful vigour, and expressed its delight by millions of mute voices, which spoke out of each leaf and twig that danced in the breeze. Nor were other and audible voices wanting. The lark sang in the sky, the grasshopper had begun its chirp, the rills and rivulets that plashed or trickled from the hills, gave out their indistinct murmur; whilst, heard far above these voices of nature, the toll of the matin bell resounded through the valley, calling the devoutly disposed to their morning thanksgiving.

The Angelus had ceased to ring when Rita and her party came in sight of the Dominican convent, their horses and mules giving evidence, by their jaded appearance, of having been ridden far, and over rough and painful roads. The gipsy rode in front, vigilant and unfatigued—although he had now been in the saddle, with little intermission, for a whole day and night—and was followed by Rita, to whose delicate frame the long ride had been an exertion as unusual as it was trying. But a resolute spirit had compensated for physical weakness, and, uncomplaining, she had borne up against the hardships of the preceding ten hours. She was

pale and harassed; her hair, uncurled by the night fogs, hung in dank masses round her face, and her fragile form was unable to maintain its upright position. Micaela, the waiting-maid, yawned incessantly, and audibly groaned at each rough stumble or uncomfortable movement of her mule. Several times, during the drowsy morning hours, she had nearly fallen from her saddle, and had to thank Paco, who had taken his station beside her, for saving her from more than one tumble. Paco, out of respect to the presence of Rita, or concern for the Count's misfortune, rode along, contrary to his custom, in profound silence, and without indulging in any of those snatches of muleteers' songs with which it was his wont to beguile the tedium of a march.

Upon nearing the place where she expected to find her father, Rita's impatience to behold him, and to ascertain for herself the exact extent of the injury he had received, increased to a feverish degree, and on reaching the convent gate, already open for her reception, she sprang from her mule without assistance. But she had overrated her strength; her limbs, stiffened by the long ride and the cold night air, refused their service, and she would have fallen to the ground, had not Paco, who had already dismounted, given her the support of his arm. The portress and another lay sister were the only persons visible in the court, and the last of these invited Rita to accompany her into the convent. Paco held out his horse's bridle and those of the mules to Jaime, intending to follow his young mistress, but the gipsy hesitated to take them, and the lay sister, perceiving Paco's intention, interposed to prevent its execution.

"You must remain here," said she; "I have no orders to admit men into the convent, nor can I, without express permission from the lady abbess."

Paco obeyed the injunction, and the three women entered

the right wing of the building. They had been gone less than a minute, when the lay sister again came forth, and summoned the gipsy. Paco remained alone with the horses.

With eager step, and a heart palpitating with anxiety, Rita followed her guide into the convent, making, as she went, anxious inquiries concerning her father's health. To her first question the old woman replied by an inarticulate mumble: and upon its repetition, a brief "I do not know; the lady abbess will see you,"—checked any further attempt upon a person who either could not or would not give the much-wished-for information. Passing through a corridor and up a staircase, the lay sister ushered Rita into an apartment of comfortable appearance.

"I will inform the abbess of your arrival," said she, as she went out.

Five minutes elapsed, and Rita, to whom this delay was as inexplicable as her impatience to see her father was great, was about to leave the room and seek or inquire the way to his apartment, when the abbess made her appearance.

"Holy mother!" exclaimed Rita, advancing with clasped hands and tearful eyes to meet her, "is my father doing well? Conduct me to him, I beseech you."

Struck by the beauty of the fair creature who thus implored her, and touched, perhaps, by the painful anxiety expressed in her trembling voice and interesting countenance, Doña Carmen hesitated to communicate her fatal tidings.

"I have painful intelligence for you, Señora," said she. "The Count, your father——"

"He is wounded; I know it," interrupted Rita. "Is he worse? Oh, let me see him!—This instant see him!"

"It is impossible," said the abbess. "The bullet that struck him was too surely aimed. Your father is dead!"

For an instant Rita gazed at the speaker as though unable fully to comprehend the terrible announcement, and then, with a shriek of heartfelt agony, she sank senseless to the ground.

The shrill and thrilling scream uttered by the bereaved daughter rang through the chambers and corridors of the convent, and reached the ears of Paco, who had remained in the court, awaiting with some impatience the return of the gipsy, and intelligence concerning the health of the Count. Abandoning his horse, he rushed instinctively to the door by which Rita had entered the building. It was closed, but not fastened, and passing through it he found himself in a long corridor, traversed by two shorter ones, and at whose extremity, through a grated window, was visible the foliage of the forest surrounding that side of the convent. Not a living creature was to be seen; and Paco paused, uncertain in what direction to proceed. He listened for a repetition of the cry, but none came. Suddenly a door, close to which he stood, was opened, and before he could turn his head to ascertain by whom, he was seized from behind, and thrown violently upon the paved floor. The attack was so vigorous and unexpected, that Paco had no time for resistance before he found himself stretched upon his back; but then he struggled furiously against his assailants, who were no others than Don Baltasar and the gipsy. So violent were his efforts, that he got the gipsy under him, and was on the point of regaining his feet, when Colonel Villabuena drew a pistol from the breast of his coat, and with its but-end dealt him a severe blow on the head. The unlucky muleteer again fell stunned to the ground. In another minute his hands were tightly bound, and Don Baltasar and his com-

panion carried him swiftly down one of the transversal corridors. Descending a flight of stone steps, the two men entered, with their burthen, a range of subterranean cloisters, at whose extremity was a low and massive door. It gave admission into a narrow cell, having a straw pallet and earthen water jug for sole furniture. Close to the roof of this dismal dungeon was an aperture in the wall, through which a strong iron grating, and the rank grass that grew outside, allowed but a faint glimmer of daylight to enter. Placing their prisoner upon the straw bed, Don Baltasar and Jaime took away his sabre and knife. They then unbound his hands, and, carefully securing the door, left him to the gloom and solitude of his dungeon.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

"Ya vienen chapelchurris
Con corneta y clarin,
Para entrar en Bilbao
A beber chacolin.

Mal chacolin tuvieron
Y dia tan fatal,
Que con la borrachera
Se murió el general."

Christino Song.

"TEN—fifteen—thirty—all plump full-weighted coins of Fernando Septimo and Carlos Quarto. Truly, Jaime, the trade thou drivest is a pleasant and profitable one. Little to do, and good pay for it."

It was a June day, a little past the middle of the month. Just within the forest that extended nearly up to the western wall of the Dominican convent, upon a plot of smooth turf, under the shadow of tall bushes and venerable trees, Jaime, the gipsy, had seated himself, and was engaged in an occupation which, to judge from the unusually well-pleased expression of his countenance, was highly congenial to his tastes. The resting-place he had chosen had the double advantage of coolness and seclusion. Whilst, in the court of the convent, and in the hollow square in the interior of the building, where the nuns cultivated a few

flowers, and which was sprinkled by the waters of a fountain, the heat was so great as to drive the sisters to their cells and shady cloisters, in the forest a delicious freshness prevailed. A light air played between the moss-clad tree-trunks, and the soft turf, protected by the foliage from the scorching sun-rays, felt cool to the foot that pressed it. Nay, in some places, where the shade was thickest, and where a current of air flowed up through the long vistas of trees, might still be seen, although the sun was in the zenith, tiny drops of the morning dew, spangling the grass-blades. Into those innermost recesses of the greenwood, however, the esquilador had not thought it necessary to penetrate: habituated to the African temperature of Southern Spain, he was satisfied with the moderate degree of shelter obtained in the little glade he occupied; into which, although the sunbeams did not enter, a certain degree of heat was reflected from the convent walls, of whose grey surface he obtained a glimpse through the branches. The sheep-skin jacket, his constant wear—lay upon the grass beside him, exposing to view a woollen shirt, composed of broad alternate stripes of red and white; the latter colour having assumed, from length of wear and lack of washing, a tint bordering upon the orange. He had untwisted the long red sash which he wore coiled round his waist, and withdrawn from one of its extremities, forming a sort of purse, a goodly handful of gold coin, the result of the more or less honest enterprises he had recently been engaged in. This he counted out and arranged according to its kind, in glittering piles of four, eight, and sixteen-dollar pieces. A grim contortion of feature, his nearest approach to a smile, testified the pleasure he experienced in thus handling and reckoning his treasure; and, in unusual contradiction to his taciturn

habits, he indulged, as he gloated over his gold, in a muttered and disjointed soliloquy.

“Hurra for the war!” so ran his monologue; “may it last till Jaime bids it cease. ’Tis meat and drink to him—ay, and better still.” Here he glanced complacently at his wealth. “Surely ’tis rare fun to see the foolish Busné cutting each other’s throats, and the poor Zincalo reaping the benefit. I’ve had fine chances, certainly, and have not thrown them away. Zumalacarregui does not pay badly; then that affair of the Christino officer was worth a good forty ounces, between him and the fool Paco; and now Don Baltasar—but he is the worst payer of all. Promises in plenty; he rattles them off his tongue as glib as the old nuns do their *paters*; but if he opens his mouth he takes good care to keep his purse shut. A pitiful two-score dollars are all I have had from him for a month’s service—I should have made more by spying for Zumalacarregui; with more risk, perhaps—though I am not sure of that. Both the noble Colonel and myself would stretch a rope if the General heard of our doings. And hear of them he will, sooner or later, unless Don Baltasar marries the girl by force, and cuts Paco’s throat. Curse him! why doesn’t he pay me the fifty ounces he promised me? If he did that, I would get out of the way till I heard how the thing turned. I will have the money next time I see him, or——”

What alternative the esquilador was about to propound must remain unknown; for at that moment the sound of his name, uttered near at hand, and in a cautious tone, made him start violently and interrupt his soliloquy. Hastily sweeping up his money, and thrusting it into his sash, he seized his jacket, and was about to seek concealment in the neighbouring bushes. Before doing so, he

cast a glance in the direction whence the sound had proceeded, and for the first time became aware that the spot selected for the telling of his ill-gotten gains was not so secure from observation as he had imagined. In the outer wall of the western wing of the convent, and at some distance from the ground, two windows broke the uniformity of the stone surface. Hitherto, whenever the gipsy had noticed them, they had been hermetically blocked up by closely-fitting shutters, painted to match the colour of the wall, of which they appeared to form a part. On taking up his position just within the skirt of the forest, the possibility of these casements being opened, and his proceedings observed, had not occurred to him; and it so happened that from one of them, through an opening in the branches, the retreat he had chosen was completely commanded. The shutter of this window had now been pushed back, and the lovely, but pallid and emaciated countenance of Rita, was seen gazing through the strong bars that traversed the aperture.

“Jaime!” she repeated; “Jaime, I would speak with you.”

Upon seeing whom it was who thus addressed him, the gipsy’s alarm ceased. He deliberately put on and knotted his sash; and casting his jacket over his shoulder, turned to leave the spot.

“Jaime!” cried Rita for the third time, “come hither, I implore you.”

The gipsy shook his head, and was walking slowly away, his face, however, still turned towards the fair prisoner, when she suddenly exclaimed—

“Behold! For one minute’s conversation it is yours.”

And in the shadow cast by the embrasure of the casement, Jaime saw a sparkle, the cause of which his covetous

eye at once detected. Three bounds, and he stood under the window. Rita passed her arm through the bars, and a jewelled ring dropped into his extended palm.

“*Hermoso!*” exclaimed the esquilador, his eyes sparkling as vividly as the stones that excited his admiration. “Beautiful! diamonds of the finest water!”

The shock of her father's death, coupled with previous fatigue and excitement, had thrown Rita into a delirious fever, which for more than three weeks confined her to her bed. Within a few hours of her arrival at the convent, Don Baltasar had been compelled to leave it, to resume his military duties; and he had not again returned, although, twice during her illness, he sent the gipsy to obtain intelligence of her health. On learning her convalescence, he despatched him thither for a third time, with a letter to Rita, urging her acceptance of his hand—their union having been, as he assured her, her father's latest wish. As her nearest surviving relative, he had assumed the office of her guardian, and allotted to her the convent as a residence, until such time as other arrangements could be made, or until she should be willing to give him a nearer right to protect her. Jaime had now been two days at the convent awaiting a reply to this letter, without which Don Baltasar had forbidden him to return. This reply, however, Rita, indignant at the restraint imposed upon her, had as yet, in spite of the arguments of the abbess, shown no disposition to pen.

With her forehead pressed against the bars of the window, Rita marked the delight manifested by the gipsy at the present she had made him. She had already observed him feasting his eyes with the sight of his money; and although she knew him to be an agent of Don Baltasar, his evident

avarice gave her hopes, that promise of large reward might induce him to betray his employer and serve her. Producing a second ring, of greater value than the one already bestowed upon him, she showed it to the wondering esquilador. He instinctively raised his hands to catch it.

"You may earn it," said Rita; "and twenty such."

And whilst with one hand she continued to expose the ring to the greedy gaze of the gipsy, with the other she held up a letter.

"For Don Baltasar?" asked the Gitano.

"No," said she. "For Zumalacarregui."

Jaime made a step backwards, and again shook his head. Rita feared that he was about to leave her.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "I entreat, I beseech you, assist me in this strait. Whatever sum your vile employer has promised you, I will give tenfold. Take my letter, and name your reward."

"That's what the other said," muttered Jaime; "'name your reward,' but he is in no hurry to pay it. If I thought her promises better than his ——"

"Listen," cried Rita, who saw him waver; "I am rich—you are poor. I have farms, estates, vineyards—you shall choose amongst them wherewith to live happily for the rest of your days. Convey this letter safely, and exchange your comfortless and disreputable wanderings for opulence and a settled home."

Jaime made a gesture of refusal.

"Your lands and your vineyards, your fields and farms, are no temptations to the Zincalo, Señora. What would they avail him? Your countrymen would say, 'Out upon the gipsy! See the thief!' They would defraud him of his lands, and spit on him if he complained. No, Señorita,

give me a roving life, and the wealth I can carry in my girdle and defend with my knife."

"It shall be as you will," cried Rita, eagerly. "Gold, jewels, whatever you prefer. This letter will procure my freedom; and, once free, you shall find me both able and disposed to reward you beyond your wildest dreams."

"Yes, if the General does not hang me when he learns my share in the business."

"I have not named you to him, nor will I. The letter is unsealed; you can read before delivering it. Your name shall never be breathed by me, save as that of my preserver."

There was an accent of sincerity in Rita's voice that made it impossible to mistrust her assurances. The gipsy, sorely tempted, was evidently about to yield. He gazed wistfully at the ring, which Rita still held up to his view; his eyes twinkled with covetousness, and he half extended his hand. Rita slipped the ring into the fold of the letter, and threw both down to him. Dexterously catching, and thrusting them into his breast, he glanced furtively around, to see that he was unobserved. He stood near the wall, just under the window, and the iron bars preventing Rita from putting out her head, only the upper half of his figure was visible to her. At that moment, to her infinite surprise and alarm, she saw an extraordinary change come over his features. Their expression of greedy cunning was replaced, with a suddenness that appeared almost magical, by one of pain and terror; and scarcely had Rita had time to observe the transformation, when he lay upon the ground, struggling violently, but in vain, against some unseen power, that drew him towards the wall. He caught at the grass and weeds, which grew in profusion on

the rarely trodden path; he writhed, and endeavoured to turn upon his face, but without success. With pale and terrified visage, but in dogged silence, he strove against an agency invisible to Rita, and which he was totally unable to resist. His body speedily vanished from her sight, then his head, and finally his outstretched arms; the rustling noise, occasioned by his passage through the herbage, ceased; and Rita, aghast at this extraordinary and mysterious occurrence, again found herself alone. We leave her to her astonishment and conjecture, whilst we follow the gipsy to the place whither he had been so involuntarily and unceremoniously conveyed, and whose description will furnish a key to his seemingly unaccountable disappearance.

It was a vault of considerable extent, surrounded by casks of various sizes. In bins, at one extremity of the cellar, were a number of bottles, whose thick mantle of dust and cobwebs spoke volumes for the ripe and racy nature of their contents. A large chest of cedar-wood stood in the innermost nook of the cellar, with raised lid, disclosing a quantity of cigars, worm-eaten and musty from extreme age. In the massive wall, forming one end of the vault, and which was in fact the foundation of the outer wall of the convent, was a large doorway; but the door had been removed, and the aperture filled with stones and plaster, forming a barrier more solid in appearance than reality. This barrier had recently been knocked down; its materials lay scattered on the ground, and through the opening thus made, came the only light that entered the vault. It proceeded from the cell in which Paco, the muleteer, had for more than a month been imprisoned.

Long, very long and wearisome, had that month of

captivity appeared to Paco. Accustomed to a life of constant activity and change, it would have been difficult to devise for him a severer punishment than inaction and confinement. The first day he passed in tolerable tranquillity of mind, occupied by vain endeavours to conjecture the motives of the violence offered to him, and momentarily anticipating his release; and although evening came without its taking place, he went to sleep, fully convinced that the next morning would be the term of his durance. Conscious of no crime, ignorant of Count Villabuena's death, and of Don Baltasar's designs, he was unable to assign a reason for his imprisonment. The next morning came, the bolts of his dungeon-door were withdrawn; he started from his pallet. The door opened, and a man entered, bringing a supply of fresh water and a meagre gaspacho. These he put down, and was leaving the cell without replying to Paco's indignant and loudly-uttered interrogatories; when the muleteer followed, and attempted to force his way out. He was met by a stern "Back!" and the muzzle of a cocked blunderbuss touched his breast. A sturdy convent servitor barred the passage, and compelled him to retreat into his prison.

Paco now gave free course to his impatience. During the whole of that day he paced his cell with the wild restlessness of a newly-caged panther; the gaspacho remained untasted, but the water-jug was quickly drained, for his throat was dry with cursing. The next morning another visit, another gaspacho and supply of water, and another attempt to leave the prison, repulsed like the previous one. On the third day, his hopes of a prompt liberation having melted away before the dogged silence and methodical regularity of his jailers, Paco cast about in his mind for means of liberating himself. First he shook and ex-

amined the door, but he might as well have attempted to shake the Pyrenees; its thick hard wood and solid fastenings mocked his efforts, and moreover he had no instruments, not so much as a rusty nail, to aid him in his attempt. The two side-walls next received his attention; but they were of great blocks of stone, joined by a cement of nearly equal hardness, and on which, although he worked till his nails were torn to shreds, and his fingers ran blood, he could not make the slightest impression. As to the wall opposite to the door, he did not even examine it; for it was easy to judge from the grass and bushes growing against the window in its top, that it was the outer wall of the convent. On this, since he could make nothing of the partition walls, all labour would of course be thrown away; and even if he could bore through it, he must find the solid earth on the other side, and be discovered before he could possibly burrow his way out. As to the window, or rather the iron-barred opening through which came light and air, for any purposes of escape it might as well not have been there, for its lower edge was nearly fourteen feet from the ground; and although Paco, who was a first-rate leaper, did, in his desperation, and in the early days of his captivity, make several violent attempts to jump up and catch hold of the grating, they were all, as may be supposed, entirely without result.

It was the thirty-fifth day of his imprisonment, an hour after daybreak. His provisions for the next twenty-four hours had been brought to him, and, as usual, he had made an unsuccessful effort to induce his sullen jailer to inform him why he was confined, and when he should be released. Gloomy and disconsolate, he seated himself on the ground, and leaned his back against the end wall of his dreary dungeon. The light from the window above his head fell

upon the opposite door, and illuminated the spot where he had scratched, with the shank of a button, a line for each day of his imprisonment. The melancholy calendar already reached half way across the door, and Paco was speculating and wondering how far it might be prolonged, when he thought he felt a stream of cold wind against his ear. He placed his hand where his ear had been, and plainly distinguished a current of air issuing from a small crevice in the wall, which otherwise was smooth and covered with plaster. Although not much of a natural philosopher, it was evident to Paco, that if wind came through, there must be a vault on the other side of the wall, and not the solid earth, as he had hitherto believed; and it was also probable that the wall was deficient either in thickness or solidity. After some scratching at the plaster, he succeeded in uncovering the side of a small irregularly-shaped stone. This a vigorous push entirely dislodged; it fell from him, leaving an opening through which he passed his arm. He found that although on one side of the aperture the wall was upwards of two feet thick, on the other it was not more than six or eight inches, and of loose construction. By a very little labour he knocked out half-a-dozen stones, and then, weary of thus making an opening piecemeal, he receded as far as he could, took a short run, and threw himself against the wall with all his force. After a few repetitions of this vigorous but not very prudent proceeding, the frail bulwark gave way, and amidst a shower of dust and mortar, Paco entered the vault into which he had conquered his passage.

The vault had apparently served, during some former occupation of the convent by monks, as the wine-cellar of the holy fathers; and had been walled up, not improbably, to protect it from the depredations of the French soldiery,

during Napoleon's occupation of Spain. As already mentioned, it was well stocked with casks of all sorts and sizes, most of them empty, and with bottles, for the most part full. Several of the latter Paco lost no time in decapitating; and a trial of their contents satisfied him that the proprietors of the cellar, whatever else they might have been, were decidedly good judges of wine. Cheered and invigorated by the pleasant liquor of which he had now so long been deprived, he commenced, as soon as his eyes had got a little accustomed to the exceedingly dim twilight that reigned in the vault, a thorough investigation of the place, in hopes of finding either an outlet, or the means of making one. In the former part of his hopes he was disappointed; but after a patient search, his pains were rewarded by the discovery of several pieces of old rope, and of a wooden bar or lever, which had probably served to raise and shift the wine-casks. The rope was not likely to be of much use, but the lever was an invaluable acquisition; and by its aid Paco entertained strong hopes of accomplishing his escape. He at once set to work to knock down the remaining stones that blocked up the doorway, and when they were cleared he rolled and dragged empty casks into his cell. Of a number of these, and with some labour, he formed a scaffolding, by which means he was enabled to reach the window, taking his crow-bar with him. His hand trembled as it grasped the grating, on the possibility of whose removal every thing depended. Viewed from the floor of his prison, the bars appeared of a formidable thickness, and he dreaded lest the time that would elapse till the next visit of his jailer, should be insufficient for him to overcome the obstacle. To his unspeakable delight, however, his first effort caused the grating to shake and rattle. The stone into which the extremities of the bars were riveted was of

no very hard description; the iron was corroded by the rust of centuries, and Paco at once saw, that what he had looked forward to as a task of severe difficulty, would be accomplished with the utmost ease. He set to work with good courage, and after a couple of hours' toil, the grating was removed, and the passage free.

Paco's first impulse was to spring through the opening into the bright sunshine without; but a moment's reflection checked him. He remembered that he was unarmed and unacquainted with the neighbourhood; and his appearance outside the convent in broad daylight might lead to his instant recapture by some of those, whoever they were, who found an interest or a gratification in keeping him prisoner. He resolved, therefore, unwillingly enough it is true, to curb his impatience, and defer his departure till nightfall. Of a visit from his jailers he felt no apprehension, for they had never yet shown themselves to him more than once a-day, and that invariably at an early hour of the morning. Partly, however, to be prepared for instant flight, should he hear his dungeon door open, and still more for the sake of inhaling the warm and aromatic breeze that blew over to him from the neighbouring woods and fields, he seated himself upon the top of his casks, his head on a level with the window, and, cautiously making a small opening in the matted vegetable screen that grew before it, gazed out upon the face of nature with a feeling of enjoyment, only to be appreciated by those who, like him, have passed five weeks in a cold, gloomy subterranean dungeon. The little he was able to distinguish of the locality was highly satisfactory. Within thirty paces of the convent wall was the commencement of a thick wood, wherein he doubted not that he should find shelter and security if observed in his flight. He would

greatly have preferred waiting the approach of night in the forest, instead of in his cell; but with a prudence hardly to be expected from him, and which the horror he had of a prolongation of his captivity alone induced him to exercise, he would not risk crossing the strip of open land between him and the wood; judging, not without reason, that it might be overlooked by the convent windows.

For some time Paco sat upon his pile of casks, feasting his eyes with the sunshine, to which they had so long been strangers; his ear on the watch, his fingers mechanically plucking and twisting the blades of grass that grew in through the window. He was arranging in his mind what route he should take, and considering where he was most likely to find Count Villabuena, when he was surprised by the sound of words, proceeding from a considerable distance above his head, but some of which nevertheless reached his quick and practised ear. Of this the one most distinctly spoken was the name of Jaime, and in the voice that spoke it, Paco was convinced that he recognised that of Count Villabuena's daughter. A few moments elapsed, something else was said—what, he was unable to make out—and then, to his no small alarm, his old acquaintance and recent betrayer, Jaime the esquilador, stood within arm's length of his window. He instinctively drew back; the gipsy was so near, that only the growth of weeds before mentioned interposed between him and the muleteer. But Paco soon saw that his proximity was unsuspected by Jaime, who had commenced the dialogue with Rita already recorded. Paco at once comprehended the situation; and emboldened by the knowledge that he, and even the aperture of the window, was concealed from sight by the grass and bushes, he again put his head as far forward as was prudent, and attentively listened. Not a word spoken by

the esquilador escaped him, but he could scarcely hear any thing of what Rita said ; for the distance between her and Jaime being diminished, she spoke in a very low tone. He made out, however, that she endeavoured to bribe the gipsy to take a letter—to whom, he did not hear—and a scheme occurred to him, the execution of which he only deferred till he should see the missive in the possession of Jaime, on whose every gesture and movement he kept a vigilant watch. At the same instant that the letter was deposited in the gipsy's pocket, Paco thrust both his hands through the grass, seized the naked ankles of the esquilador in a vice-like grip, and by a sudden jerk throwing him upon his back, dragged him through the aperture behind which he himself was stationed. His strength and adroitness, and the suddenness of the attack, ensured its success ; and in spite of the gipsy's struggles, Paco speedily pulled him completely into the dungeon, upon whose ground he cast him down with a force that might well have broken the bones, but which, as it happened, merely took away the senses, of the terrified esquilador.

The strange and mysterious manner of the assault, the stunning violence of his fall, and his position on regaining the consciousness of which he had for a brief space been deprived, combined to bewilder the gipsy, and temporarily to quell the courage, or, as it should perhaps rather be termed, the passive stoicism, usually exhibited by him in circumstances of danger. He had been dragged into the wine-cellar, and seated with his back against a cask ; his wrists and ankles were bound with ropes, and beside him knelt a man busily engaged in searching his pockets. The light was so faint that at first he could not distinguish the features of this person ; but when at last he recognised those of Paco, he conjectured to a certain extent the nature

of the snare into which he had fallen, and, as he did so, his usual coolness and confidence in some degree returned. His first words were an attempt to intimidate his captor.

"Untie my hands," said he, "or I shout for help. I have but to call out, to be released immediately."

"If that were true, you would have done it, and not told me of it," retorted Paco, with his usual acuteness. "The walls are thick and the vault deep, and I believe you might shout long enough before any one heard you. But I advise you not to try. The first word you speak in a louder tone than pleases me, I cut your throat like a pig; with your own knife, too."

And, by way of confirming this agreeable assurance, he drew the cold blade across Jaime's throat, with such a fierce determined movement, that the startled gipsy writhed in alarm. Paco marked the effect of his menace.

"You see," said he, sticking the knife in the ground beside him, and continuing his investigation of the esquilador's pockets, "you had better be quiet, and answer my questions civilly. For whom is this letter?" continued he, holding up Rita's missive, extracted from the gipsy's jacket.

But although the esquilador (partly on account of Paco's threats, and partly because he knew that his cries were unlikely to bring assistance) made no attempt to call out, he did not, on the other hand, show any disposition to communicativeness. Instead of replying to the questions put to him, he maintained a surly, dogged silence. Paco repeated the interrogatory without obtaining a better result, and then, as if weary of questioning a man who would not answer, he continued his search without further waste of words. The two rings and Rita's letter he had already

found; they were succeeded by a miscellany of objects which he threw carelessly aside; and having rummaged the esquilador's various pockets, he proceeded to unfasten his sash. The first demonstration of a design upon this receptacle of his wealth, produced, on the part of the gipsy, a violent but fruitless effort to liberate his wrists from the cords that confined them.

"Oho!" said Paco, "is that the sore place? Faith! there is reason for your wincing," he added, as the gold contained in the girdle fell jingling on the floor. "This was not all got by clipping mules."

"It was received from you, the greater part of it," exclaimed the gipsy, forced out of his taciturnity by the agony with which he saw Paco, after replacing the money in the sash, deliberately bind it round his own waist. "I worked hard and ran risk for it, and you paid it me willingly. Surely you will not rob me!"

Without attending to this expostulation, Paco secured the gold, and then rising to his feet, repeated the question he had already twice put to his prisoner.

"To whom is this letter?" said he.

"You may read it yourself," returned Jaime, who notwithstanding the intelligible hint to be tractable which he had already received, found it a hard matter to restrain his sulkiness. "It is addressed, and open."

Read it was exactly what Paco would have done, had he been able; but it so happened that the muleteer was a self-educated man, and that, whilst teaching himself many things which he had on various occasions found of much utility, he had given but a moderate share of his attention to the acquirement of letters. When on the road with his mules, he could distinguish the large printed capitals painted on the packages entrusted to his care; he was also

able, from long habit, fluently to read the usual announcement of "*Vinos y licores finos*," inscribed above tavern doors; and, when required, he could even perpetrate a hieroglyphic intended for the signature of his name; but these were the extent of his acquirements. As to deciphering the contents or superscription of the letter now in his possession, he knew that it would be mere lost labour to attempt it. He was far too wary, however, to display his ignorance to the gipsy, and thus to strengthen him in his refusal to say for whom it was intended.

"Of course I may read it," he replied; "but here it is too dark, and I have no mind to leave you alone. Answer me, or it will be worse for you."

Either suspecting how the case really stood, or through sullenness at the loss of his money, the gipsy remained, with lowering brow and compressed lips, obstinately silent. For a few moments Paco awaited a reply, and then walking to a short distance, he picked up something that lay in a dark corner of the vault, returned to the gipsy, and placing his hands upon the edge of the tall cask against which the latter was seated, sprang actively upon the top of it. Soon he again descended, and, upsetting the cask, gave it a shove with his foot that sent it rolling into the middle of the cellar. The gipsy, although motionless, and to all appearance inattentive to what passed, lost not one of the muleteer's movements. His head stirred not, but his sunken bead-like eyes shifted their glances with extraordinary keenness and rapidity. At the moment when, surprised by the sudden removal of the cask, he screwed his head round to see what was going on behind him, a rope was passed swiftly over his face, and the next instant he felt his neck encircled by a halter. A number of strong hooks and wooden brackets, used to support shelves and

suspend wine-skins, were firmly stuck in the cellar wall, at various distances from the ground. Over the highest of these, Paco had cast a rope, one end of which he held, whilst the other, as already mentioned, was fixed round the neck of the gipsy. Retiring a couple of paces, the muleteer hauled on the rope; it tightened round the neck of the unlucky Jaime, and even lifted him a little from the ground. He strove to rise to his feet from his sitting posture, but his bonds prevented him. Stumbling and helpless, he fell over on one side, and would inevitably have been strangled, had not Paco given him more line. The fear of death came over him. He trembled violently, and his face, smeared with blood from the scratches he had received in his passage through the bushes, became of an ash-like paleness. He cast a piteous look at Paco, who surveyed him with unrelenting aspect.

"Not the first time I've had you at a rope's end," said he; "although the knot wasn't always in the same place. Come, I've no time to lose! Will you answer or hang?"

"What do you want to know?"

"I have asked you three times," returned Paco impatiently, "who this letter is for, and what about."

"For Zumalacarregui," replied Jaime; "and now you know as much as I do."

"Why have I been kept in prison?" demanded Paco.

"Why did you come with the lady?" replied the esquilador. "Had you stopped at Segura, no one would have meddled with you."

"I came because I was ordered. Where is Doña Rita?"

The gipsy hesitated, and then answered surlily. "I do not know."

Paco gave the rope a twitch which brought the esquilador's tongue out of his mouth.

"Liar!" he exclaimed; "I heard you speaking to her. What does she here?"

"A prisoner," muttered the half-strangled gipsy.

"Whose?"

"Colonel Villabuena's."

"And the Señor Conde. Where is he?"

"Dead."

"Dead!" repeated Paco, letting the rope go, grasping the esquilador by the collar, and furiously shaking him. "The noble Count dead! When did he die? Or is it a lie of your invention?"

"He was dead before I fetched the young lady from Segura," said Jaime. "The story of his being wounded, and wishing to see her, was merely a stratagem to bring her here."

Relinquishing his hold, Paco took a step backwards, in grief and great astonishment. The answers he had forced from Jaime, and his own natural quickness of apprehension, were sufficient to enlighten him as to the main outline of what he had hitherto found a mystery. He at once conjectured Don Baltasar's designs, and the motives of Doña Rita's imprisonment and his own. That the Count was really dead he could not doubt; for otherwise Baltasar would hardly have ventured upon his daughter's abduction. Aware that the Count's duties and usual occupations did not lead him into actual collision with the enemy, and that they could scarcely, except by a casualty, endanger his life, it occurred to Paco, as highly probable, that he had met his death by unfair means, at the hands of Don Baltasar and the gipsy. The Colonel he suspected, and the esquilador

he knew, to be capable of any iniquity. Such were some of the reflections that passed rapidly through his mind during the few moments that he stood beside Jaime, mute and motionless, meditating on what had passed, and on what he should now do. Naturally prompt and decided, and accustomed to perilous emergencies, he soon made up his mind. Starting from his immobility, he seized the end of the halter, and, to the horror of the gipsy, whose eyes were fixed upon him, pulled furiously at it, hand over hand, like a sailor tugging at a hawser.

"*Misericordia!*" screamed the horror-stricken esquilador, as he found himself lifted from the ground by the neck. "Mercy! mercy!"

But mercy there was none for him. His cries were stifled by the pressure of the rope, and then he made a desperate effort to gain his feet. In this he succeeded, and stood upright, thus for a moment causing the noose to slacken. He profited by the temporary relief to attempt another ineffectual prayer for pity. A gasping, inarticulate noise in his throat was the sole result; for the muleteer continued his vigorous pulls at the cord, and in an instant the unhappy gipsy felt himself lifted completely off the ground. He made one more violent strain to touch the earth with the point of his foot; but no—all was in vain—higher and higher he went, till the crown of his head struck against the long iron hook through the loop of which the halter ran. Paco caught his end of the rope round another hook at a less height from the ground, and twisted and knotted it securely; then stooping, he picked up the esquilador's knife, re-entered the dungeon, and ascended the pile of casks erected below the window. On the top of these he sat himself down and listened. From the wine-cellar there proceeded a noise, as of a scraping and thump-

ing against the wall. It was the wretched gipsy kicking and struggling in his last agony.

"He dies hard," muttered Paco, a slight expression of compunction coming over his features, "and I strung him up without priest or prayer. But, what then! those gitanos are worse than Jews, they believe neither in God nor devil. As for his death, he deserves it, the dog! ten times over. And if he didn't, Doña Rita's fate depends on my escape, and I cannot leave him there to alarm the convent and have me pursued."

His scruples quieted by these arguments, the muleteer again listened. All was silent in the vault. Paco cautiously put his head out of window. The coast was clear, the forest within thirty yards. Winding his body noiselessly through the aperture, he sprang to his feet, and with the speed of a greyhound sought the cover of the wood. Upon reaching the shelter of its foremost trees he paused, and turning round, looked back at the convent, hoping to see something of Rita. But she had disappeared, and the shutters were closed. It would have been folly, under the circumstances, to wait the chance of her return; and once more turning his back upon the place of his captivity, the muleteer, exulting in his newly recovered freedom, plunged, with quick and elastic step, into the innermost recesses of the forest.

Rightly conjecturing that Rita, informed of her father's death, and having no influential friend to whom to apply for aid, had written to Zumalacarregui with a view to obtain her release, Paco determined to convey the letter to its destination as speedily as possible. To do this it was necessary, first, to ascertain the whereabouts of the Carlist general, and secondly, to avoid falling in with Colonel Villabuena, a meeting with whom might not only prevent

the delivery of the letter, but also again endanger Paco's liberty, perhaps his life. Shaping his course through the forest in, as nearly as he could judge, a westerly direction, he reached the mountains at sunset, and continued his march along their base—avoiding the more frequented path by which he had approached the convent—until he reached an outlet of the valley. Through this he passed; and keeping straight forward, without any other immediate object than that of increasing the distance between himself and his late prison, he found himself, some time after midnight, clear of the lofty range of mountains, a limb of the Spanish Pyrenees, in one of whose recesses the convent stood. The country in front, and on both sides of him, was still mountainous, but the elevations were less; and Paco, who had a good general knowledge of the geography of his native province, with most parts of which his avocations as muleteer had familiarised him, conjectured that he was on the extreme verge of Navarre, and about to enter the province of Guipuzcoa. He had deemed it prudent to avoid human habitations whilst still in the vicinity of the convent; but having now left it some leagues in his rear, the necessity for such caution no longer existed, and he looked about for a convenient place to take a few hours' repose. At the distance of a mile he perceived the white walls of houses shimmering in the moonlight, and he bent his steps in that direction. It was two in the morning, and the hamlet was buried in sleep; the sharp, sudden bark of a watch-dog was the only sound that greeted the muleteer as he passed under the irregular avenue of trees preceding its solitary street. Entering a barn, whose door stood invitingly open, he threw himself upon a pile of newly-made hay, and was instantly plunged in a sleep far sounder and

more refreshing than any he had enjoyed during the whole period of his captivity.

It was still early morning when he was roused from his slumbers by the entrance of the proprietor of the barn, a sturdy, good-humoured peasant, who was more surprised than pleased to find upon his premises a stranger of Paco's equivocal appearance. The muleteer's exterior was certainly not calculated to give a high opinion of his respectability. His uniform jacket of dark-green cloth was soiled and torn; his boina, which had served for a nightcap during his imprisonment, was in equally bad plight; he was uncombed and unwashed, and a beard of nearly six weeks' growth adorned his face. In a tone of some suspicion, the peasant inquired his business, but Paco had his answer ready. Taken prisoner by the Christinos, he said, he had escaped from Pampeluna after a confinement of some duration, and, ignorant of the country, had wandered about for two nights, lying concealed during the day, and afraid to approach villages lest he should again fall into the hands of the enemy. The haggard look he had acquired during his imprisonment, his beard and general appearance, and the circumstance of his being unarmed, although in uniform, seemed to confirm the truth of his tale; and the peasant, who, like all of his class at that time and in that province, was an enthusiastic Carlist, willingly supplied him with the razor and refreshment of which he stood in pressing need. His appearance somewhat improved, and his appetite satisfied, Paco in his turn became the interrogator, and the first answers he received caused him extreme surprise. The most triumphant success had waited on the Carlist arms during the period of his captivity. The Christino generals had been on all hands discomfited by the men at whose

discipline and courage, even more than at their poverty and imperfect resources, they affected to sneer, and numerous towns and fortified places had fallen into the hands of Zumalacarregui and his victorious lieutenants. The mere name of the Carlist chief had become a tower of strength to his followers, and a terror to his foes; and several ably managed surprises had greatly increased the panic dread with which the news of his approach now inspired the Christino troops. On the heights of Descarga a strong column of the Queen's army had been attacked and routed in the night time, by the Carlist general Eraso; in the valley of the Baztan, General Oraa had been beaten by Sagastibelza, leaving ninety officers and seven hundred men in the hands of the victors; Estella, Vergara, Tolosa, Villafranca, and numerous other considerable towns, were held by the soldiers of the Pretender; and, to crown all, Paco learned, to his astonishment, that Zumalacarregui and his army were then in front of Bilboa, vigorously besieging that rich and important city.

Towards Bilboa, then, did Paco bend his steps. Owing to its remote position, the village where he had obtained the above information was but irregularly supplied with intelligence from the army; and it was not till the evening of his first day's march, that the muleteer heard news which redoubled his eagerness to reach the Carlist headquarters. Zumalacarregui, he was informed, had received, whilst directing the operations of the siege, a severe and dangerous wound. Fearing the General might die before he reached him, Paco endeavoured to hire or purchase a horse; but all that could be spared had been taken for the Carlist army; and he rightly judged that through so mountainous a country he should make better progress on foot than on

any Rosinante offered to him. He pushed forward, therefore, with all possible haste ; but his feet had grown tender during his imprisonment, and he was but indifferently satisfied with his rate of marching. On the following day his anxiety was considerably dissipated by learning that Zumalacarregui's wound was slight, and that the surgeons had predicted a rapid cure. He nevertheless abated none of his speed, and on the afternoon of the fourth day reached the summit of the hills that overlook Bilboa. The suburbs were occupied by the Carlists, the fire of whose slender battering train was vigorously replied to by the forty or fifty cannon bristling the fortifications. Entering the faubourg known as the Barrio de Bolueta, he approached a group of soldiers lounging in front of their quarters, and inquired where the General was lodged. The men seemed surprised at the question, and asked what general he meant.

"The general-in-chief, Zumalacarregui, to be sure," replied Paco impatiently.

"Where come you from, *amigo*," said one of the soldiers, "not to know that Zumalacarregui left the lines the day after he was wounded, and is now getting cured at Cegama?"

Great was Paco's vexation on finding that the person he had come so far to seek, had been all the while at a village within a day's march of the Dominican convent. His annoyance was so legibly written upon his countenance, that one of the soldiers took upon himself to offer a word of consolation.

"Never mind, comrade," said he, "if you want to see Tio Tomas, you can't do better than remain here. You won't have long to wait. He has only got a scratch on the leg, and we expect every day to see him ride into

the lines. He's not the man to be laid up long by such a trifle."

"Is Colonel Villabuena here?" said Paco, somewhat reassured by this last information.

"What! Black Baltasar, as they call him? Ay, that he is, and be hanged to him. It's only two days since he ordered me an extra turn of picket for forgetting to salute him as he passed my beat. Curse him for a soldier's plague!"

Paco walked on till he came to a small house, which the juniper bush suspended above the door proclaimed to be a tavern. Entering a smoky low-roofed room upon the ground-floor, just then unoccupied, he sat down by the open window and called for a *quartillo* of wine. A measure of the vinegar-flavoured liquid known as *chacolin*, and drunk for wine in the province of Biscay, was brought to him, and after washing the dust out of his throat, he reflected on what was best to do in his present dilemma. He was desirous to get out of Don Baltasar's neighbourhood, and, moreover, if he did not rejoin his regiment or report himself to the military authorities, he was liable to be arrested as a deserter. In that case, he could hardly hope that the strange story of his imprisonment at the convent would find credit, and, even if it did, delay would inevitably ensue. Finally, he resolved to remain where he was for the night, and start early next morning for Cegama. A better and more speedy plan would perhaps have been to seek one of Zumalacarregui's aides-de-camp, relate his recent adventures, produce Rita's letter in corroboration of his veracity, and request him to forward it, or to provide him with a horse to take it himself. But although he thought of this plan, the gain in time appeared insufficient to compensate the risk of

meeting Don Baltasar and of being by him thrown into prison and deprived of the letter.

The day had been most sultry, and Paco had walked, with but a ten minutes' halt, from sunrise till afternoon. Overcome by fatigue and drowsiness, he had no sooner decided on his future proceedings, and emptied his quartillo, events which were about coincident, than his head nodded and drooped, and after a few faint struggles against the sleepy impulse, it fell forward upon the table, and he slept as men sleep after a twelve hours' march under a Spanish sun in the month of June. During his slumbers various persons passed in and out of the room; but there was nothing unusual in seeing a soldier dozing off his wine or fatigue on a tavern table, and none disturbed or took especial notice of him. Paco slept on.

It was evening when he awoke, and rose from his bench with a hearty stretch of his stiffened limbs. As he did so, he heard the sound of footsteps in the street. It ceased near the window, and a dialogue commenced, a portion of which reached his ears.

"Have you heard the news?" said one speaker.

"No," was the reply, in a voice that made Paco start. "I am off to Eraso's quarters to get them. I hear a courier arrived from Durango half an hour since, covered with foam, and spurring as on a life or death errand."

Whilst this was saying, Paco noiselessly approached the window. It was large and square, about four feet from the ground, and closed only by a clumsy shutter, at that moment wide open. Crouching down, he cautiously raised his head so as to obtain a view of the street, without exposing more than the upper part of his face to the possible observation of the persons outside. What he

saw, confirmed the testimony of his ears: two officers in staff uniforms stood within twenty paces of the window, and in the one who had last spoken, Paco recognised Don Baltasar. His face was towards the tavern, but his eyes were fixed upon his interlocutor.

“On an errand of death, indeed!” replied the latter, in tones which, although suppressed, were distinctly audible to the muleteer. “Zumalacarregui is no more.”

In his consternation at the intelligence thus unwittingly conveyed to him, Paco forgot for a second the caution rendered imperative by his position. A half-smothered exclamation escaped him, and by an involuntary start he raised his head completely above the window-sill. As he did so, he fancied he saw Don Baltasar glance at the window, and in his turn slightly start; but the sun had already passed the horizon, the light waned fast, and Colonel Villabuena took no further notice, but remained talking with his companion. Paco made sure that he had either not seen him, or, which was still more probable, not remembered his face. Nevertheless the muleteer retreated a little from the window, straining his hearing to catch what passed.

He missed a sentence or two, and then again heard Colonel Villabuena's voice.

“Most disastrous intelligence, indeed!” said he, “and as unexpected as disastrous. I will go to the General for the particulars.”

The officers separated; Don Baltasar walking rapidly away, as Paco, who now ventured to look out, was able to ascertain. Satisfied that he had escaped the peril which for a moment he thought had menaced him, he left the window and returned to his bench. But Don Baltasar had sharper eyes and a better memory than the muleteer gave

him credit for. He had fully recognised Paco, whom he had often seen in attendance on the Count, and, without pausing to reflect how his escape could have occurred, he at once decided what measures to take to neutralise its evil consequences. Had Paco remained an instant longer at his post of observation, he would have seen the Colonel stop at a house near at hand, in which a number of soldiers were billeted, summon a corporal and three men, and retrace his steps to the tavern. Leaving two soldiers at the door, with the others he burst into the room occupied by the muleteer.

At the moment of their entrance, Paco, who, although he had heard footsteps in the passage, did not suspect the new-comers to be others than some of the usual customers to the tavern, had raised the heavy earthen jug containing his wine, and decanted from it into his glass a last mouthful that still remained at the bottom. No sooner did he behold Don Baltasar, closely followed by two soldiers with fixed bayonets, than with his usual bold decision, and with his utmost strength, he dashed the jug full at him. The missile struck the officer on the chest with such force that he staggered back, impeding, for a moment, the advance of his followers. That moment saved Paco's liberty—probably his life. Springing to the window, he leaped out, and alighting upon one of the soldiers who had remained outside, knocked him over. The other sentry, taken by surprise, made a feeble thrust at the fugitive. Paco parried it with his arm, grappled the man, gave him a kick on the shin that knocked his leg from under him, rolled him on the ground by the side of his companion, and scudded down the street like a hunted fox, just as Baltasar and his men jumped out of the window.

“Fire!” shouted the Colonel.

Two bullets, and then two more, struck the walls of the narrow sloping street through which the muleteer ran, or buried themselves in the earth a short distance in his front. Paco ran all the faster, cleared the houses of the suburb, and scampered towards the town. The shouts and firing had alarmed the Carlist camp, the soldiers turned out on all sides, and the outposts were on the alert. Paco approached the latter. A sentinel was in his path.

"*Quien vive?*" challenged the soldier, when the muleteer was still at a considerable distance from him.

"*Carlos Quinto,*" replied Paco.

"Halt!" thundered the sentry, bringing his musket to his shoulder with a sharp quick rattle.

This command, although enforced by a menace, Paco was not disposed to obey. For one musket in front, there were hundreds in rear; and he continued his onward course, merely inclining to his left, so as to present a less easy mark than when bearing straight down upon the sentry. Another "halt!" immediately followed by the report of the piece, was echoed by a laugh of derision from Paco. "Stop him! bayonet him!" shouted a score of voices. The sentinel rushed forward to obey the command; but Paco, unarmed and unencumbered, was too quick for him. Dashing past within a yard of the bayonet's point, he tore along to the town, amidst a rain of bullets, encouraged by the cheers of the Christinos, who had assembled in groups to watch the race; and, replying to their shouts and applause by a yell of "*Viva la Reyna!*" he in another minute stood safe and sheltered within the exterior fortifications of Bilboa.

Three weeks had elapsed since the death of Zumalacar-

regui, and that important event, which the partisans of the Spanish pretender had, as long as possible, kept secret from their opponents, was now universally known. Already did the operations of the Carlists show symptoms of the great loss they had sustained in the person of a man who, during his brief but brilliant command, nailed victory to his standard. Even during his last illness, Zumalacarregui kept up, from his couch of suffering, a constant correspondence with General Eraso, his second in command, and in some degree directed his proceedings; but when he died, the system of warfare he had uniformly, and with such happy results, followed up, was exchanged by those who came after him, for another and a less judicious one. This, added to the immense moral weight of his loss, which filled the Christinos with buoyant anticipations, whilst it grievously discouraged the Carlists, caused the tide of fortune to turn against the latter. Dejected and disheartened, they were beaten from before Bilbao, the town which, but for Zumalacarregui's overstrained deference to the wishes of Don Carlos, they would never have attacked. On the other hand, the Christinos were sanguine of victory, and of a speedy termination of the war. The baton of command, after passing through the hands of Rodil, Sarsfield, Mina, and other veterans whose experience had struggled in vain against the skill and prestige of the Carlist chief, had just been bestowed by the Queen's government on a young general in whose zeal and abilities great reliance was placed. On various occasions, since the death of Ferdinand, had this officer, at the head of his brigade or division, given proof not only of that intrepidity which, although the soldier's first virtue, should be the general's least merit, but, as was generally believed, of military talents of a high order.

Luis Fernandez de Cordova, son of a poor but noble family in the south of Spain, was educated at a military school, whence he passed with an officer's commission into a regiment of the royal guard. Endowed with considerable natural ability and tact, he won the favour of Ferdinand VII., and by that bad and fickle monarch was quickly raised to the rank of colonel. His then bias, however, was for diplomacy, for which, indeed, his subsequent life, and his turn for intrigue, showed him well qualified; and at his repeated instance he was sent to various courts in high diplomatic capacities. "We are sorry to have to say," remarks a Spanish military writer who fought in the opposite ranks, "that Cordova in part owed his elevation to the goodness of the very prince against whom he subsequently drew his sword." Be that as it may, at the death of Ferdinand, Cordova, although little more than thirty years of age, was already a general, and ambassador at Copenhagen. Ever keenly alive to his own interest, he no sooner learned the outbreak of the civil war, than he saw in it an opportunity of further advancement; and, without losing a moment, he posted to Madrid, threw himself at the feet of Christina, and implored her to give him a command, that he might have an opportunity of proving with his sword his devotion to the widow and daughter of his lamented sovereign. His prayer was granted; his talents were by no means contemptible, his self-confidence unbounded, intrigue and interest were not wanting to back such qualities; and at the period now referred to, Cordova, to the infinite vexation of many a grey-haired general whose epaulets had been earned on the battle-fields of America and the Peninsula, was appointed commander-in-chief of the Army of the North.

Upon assuming the supreme command, Cordova marched his army, which had just compelled the Carlists to raise the

siege of Bilboa, in the direction of the Ebro. Meanwhile the Carlists, foiled in Biscay, concentrated their forces in central Navarre. As if to make up for their recent disappointment, they had resolved upon the attack of a town, less wealthy and important, it is true, than Bilboa, but which still would have been a most advantageous acquisition, giving them, so long as they held it, command of the communications between Pampeluna and the Upper Ebro. Against Puente de la Reyna, a fortified place upon the Arga, were their operations directed, and there, upon the 13th of July, the bulk of the Carlist army arrived. Don Carlos himself accompanied it, but the command devolved upon Eraso, the military capabilities of Charles the Fifth being limited to praying, amidst a circle of friars and shavelings, for the success of those who shed their heart's blood in his cause. The neighbouring peasants were set to work to cut trenches; and preparations were making to carry on the siege in due form, when, on the 14th, the garrison, in a vigorous sortie, killed the commandant of the Carlist artillery, and captured a mortar that had been placed in position. The same day Cordova and his army started from Lerin, which they had reached upon the 13th, and arrived at nightfall at Larraga, a town also upon the Arga, and within a few miles of Puente de la Reyna.

The next day was passed by the two considerable armies, which, it was easy to foresee, would soon come into hostile collision, in various movements and manœuvres, serving to diminish the distance between them, already not great. The Carlists, discouraged by the successful sortie of the 14th, retired from before Puente de la Reyna, moved southwards, and occupied the town and bridge of Mendigorria. On the other hand, two-thirds of the Christino forces crossed the Arga, and quartered themselves in and

near the town of Artajona. The plain on the left bank of the river was evidently to be the scene of the approaching conflict. On few occasions during the war had actions taken place upon such level ground as this, the superiority of the Christinos in cavalry and artillery having induced Zumalacargui to seek battle rather in the mountains, where those arms were less available. But since the commencement of 1835 the Carlist horse had improved in numbers and discipline; several cavalry officers of rank and skill had joined it, and assisted in its organisation; and although deprived of its gallant leader, Carlos O'Donnel—who had fallen victim to his own imprudent daring in an insignificant skirmish beneath the walls of Pampeluna—Eraso, and the other Carlist generals, had now sufficient confidence in its efficiency to risk a battle in a comparatively level country. Numerically, the Carlists were superior to their opponents, but in artillery, and especially in cavalry, the Christinos had the advantage. From various garrison towns, through which he passed on his circuitous route from Bilboa to Larraga, the Christino commander had collected reinforcements; and an imposing number of squadrons, including several of lancers and dragoons of the royal guard, formed part of the force now assembled at Larraga and Artajona.

It was late on the evening of the 15th of July, and on a number of gently sloping fields, interspersed with vineyards and dotted with trees, a Christino brigade, including a regiment of cavalry, had established its bivouac. In such weather as it then was, it became a luxury to pass a night in the open air, with turf for a mattress, a cloak for a pillow, and the branches for curtains, instead of being cramped and crowded into smoky, vermin-haunted cottages; and the troops assembled seemed to feel this, and to enjoy the

light and balmy breeze and refreshing coolness succeeding the extreme heat of the day. Few troops are so picturesque in a bivouac as Spaniards; none, certainly, are greater adepts in rendering an out-door encampment not only endurable but agreeable, and nothing had been neglected by the Christinos that could contribute to the comfort of their *al-fresco* lodging. Large fires had been lighted, composed in great part of odoriferous shrubs and bushes abounding in the neighbourhood, which scented the air as they burned; and around these the soldiers were assembled, cooking and eating their rations, smoking, jesting, discussing some previous fight, or anticipating the result of the one expected for the morrow, and which, according to their sanguine calculations, could not but be favourable to them. Here was a seemingly interminable row of muskets piled in sheaves, perfect *chevaux-de-frise*, some hundred yards of burnished barrels and bayonets glancing in the fire-light. Further on, the horses of the cavalry were picketed; whilst their riders, after grooming and feeding them, looked to arms and saddlery, and saw that all was ready and as it should be for sudden service. On one side, at a short distance from the bivouac, a party of men cut, with their sabres and foraging hatchets, brushwood to renew the fires; in another direction, a train of carts laden with straw, driven by unwilling peasants, and escorted by a surly commissary and a few dusty dragoons, made their appearance, the patient oxen pushing and straining forwards in obedience to the goad that tormented their flanks, the clumsy wheels, solid circles of wood, creaking round their ungreased axles. In the distance were the enemy's watch-fires; nearer blazed those of the advanced posts; and, at more than one point of the surrounding country, a cottage

or farm-house, set on fire by careless or mischievous marauders, fiercely flamed without an attempt being made to extinguish the conflagration.

If the sights that met the eye were varied and numerous, the sounds which fell upon the ear were scarcely less so. The neighing of the picketed horses, the songs of the soldiery, the bugle-calls and signals of the outposts, occasionally a few dropping shots exchanged between patrols, and from time to time some favourite national melody, clanged forth by a regimental band—all combined to give life and spirit to the scene.

Beside a watch-fire whose smoke, curling and wavering upwards, seemed to cling about the foliage of the large old tree near which it was lighted, Luis Herrera had spread his cloak, and now reclined, his head supported on his arm, gazing into the flaming pile. Officers belonging to the squadron he commanded were also grouped round the fire, and some of them, less watchful or more fatigued than their leader, had rolled themselves in their mantles, turned their feet to the flame, and, with their heads supported on saddles and valises, already slept. Two or three subalterns came and went, as the exigencies of the service required, inspecting the arrangements of the men, ascertaining that the horses were cared for, giving orders to sergeants, or bringing reports to the captains of their troops. Herrera as yet felt no disposition to sleep. The stir and excitement around him had not failed of their effect upon his martial nature, and he felt cheered and exhilarated by the prospect of action. It was only in moments like these, during the fight itself, or the hours immediately preceding it, that his character lost the gloomy tinge imparted to it by the misfortunes which, so early in life, had darkened his

path, and recovered something of the buoyancy natural to his age.

Whilst busied with anticipations of the next day's battle, Herrera's attention was suddenly attracted by hearing his name pronounced at a neighbouring fire, round which a party of his troopers had established themselves.

"Captain Herrera?" said a soldier, replying to a question; "he is here. What do you want?"

"To see him instantly," answered a voice not unfamiliar to the ear of Luis. "I bring important intelligence."

"Come this way," was the reply; and then a non-commissioned officer approached Herrera, and respectfully saluting, informed him that a *paisano*, or civilian, wished to speak with him. Before Luis could give an order, a man mounted on a rough but active mountain horse rode out of the gloom into the fire-light, threw himself from his saddle, and stood within three paces of the Christino officer. By the blaze, Herrera recognised, with some surprise, one whom he believed to be in the Carlist ranks.

"Paco!" he exclaimed; "you here? Whence do you come, and what are your tidings?"

The corporal, who had acted as master of the ceremonies to Paco, now returned to his fire, and Herrera and the muleteer remained alone. The latter had got rid of all vestiges of uniform, and appeared in the garb he had been accustomed to wear, before his devotion to Count Villabuena, and the feeling of partisanship for Don Carlos, which he shared with the majority of Navarrese, had led him to enter the ranks.

"I have much to tell you, Don Luis," said he; "and my news is bad. Count Villabuena is dead."

Instead of manifesting astonishment or grief at this intel-

ligence, Herrera replied calmly, and almost with a smile, "Is that all?"

"All!" repeated Paco, aghast at such unfeeling indifference; "and enough, too. I did not think, that because you had taken different sides, all kindness was at an end between you and the Conde. His señoría, heaven rest him!"—and here Paco crossed himself,—"deserved better of you, Don Luis. But for him your bones would long ago have been picked by the crows. It was he who rescued you when you were a prisoner, and ordered for execution."

"I know it, Paco," replied Herrera, "and I am grateful for my deliverance both to you and him. But you are mistaken about his death. I saw and spoke to the Count not three days ago."

"To the Count! to Count Villabuena?" exclaimed Paco. "Then that damned gipsy lied. He told me he was killed, shot by some of your people. How did you see him? Is he a prisoner?"

"The Count is alive and in safety, and that must satisfy you for the present. But you have doubtless more to tell me. What of Doña Rita? Why and when did you leave the Carlists; where was she when you left?"

"Since the Count is well," returned Paco, "the worst part of my news is to come. Doña Rita's own handwriting will best answer your question."

Opening his knife, Paco ripped a seam of his jacket, and extracted from the lining a soiled and crumpled paper. It was Rita's letter to Zumalacarregui. By the fire-light, Herrera devoured its contents. From them he learned all that Rita herself knew of the place and reasons of her captivity. She detailed the manner in which she had been decoyed from Segura, described what she con-

jected to be the position of the convent, and implored Zumalacarregui to protect a defenceless orphan, and rescue her from the prison where she was unjustifiably detained. After twice reading the letter, whose handwriting recalled a thousand tender recollections, although its information filled him with alarm and anxiety, Herrera again addressed Paco.

“How got you this letter?” he asked.

In few words, Paco, who saw, by the stern and hurried manner of his interrogator, that it was no time to indulge in a lengthened narrative of his adventures, gave a concise outline of what had occurred, from the time of his leaving Segura with Rita, up to his desertion from the Carlists in front of Bilboa. Upon finding himself in safety from Don Baltasar, and released from the obligations of military service, he deliberated on the best means to employ for the release of Doña Rita. Amongst the Christinos the only person who occurred to him as proper to consult, or likely to aid him, was Herrera, and him he resolved to seek. After waiting a week at Bilboa, he procured a passage in a small vessel sailing for Santander, and thence set out for the Ebro, in the neighbourhood of which he had ascertained that he should find Herrera’s regiment. The money he had taken from the gipsy’s sash enabled him to supply his wants and purchase a horse, and without further delay he started for the interior. But on reaching Miranda he learned that Herrera’s squadron had marched into Biscay. Thither he pursued it. Meanwhile the siege of Bilboa had been raised, and, whilst he followed one road, Herrera returned to Navarre by another. Paco lost much time; but, though often disappointed, the faithful fellow was never discouraged, nor did he for a moment think of desisting from the pilgrim-

age he had voluntarily undertaken for the deliverance of his dead master's daughter. He pressed onwards, sparing neither himself nor his newly-acquired steed ; but, in spite of his exertions, so rapid and continuous were the movements of the army, that it was not till the evening now referred to that he at last caught it up.

Of all this, however, and of whatever merely concerned himself, Paco made little mention, limiting himself to what it was absolutely necessary for Herrera to know, clearly to understand Rita's position. In spite of this brevity, more than one sign of impatience escaped Luis during the muleteer's narrative. The tale told, he remained for a minute buried in thought.

"It is three weeks since you left the convent?" he then inquired of Paco.

"Nearly four," was the answer.

"Do you think Doña Rita is still there?"

"How can I tell?" replied Paco. "You know as much as I do of Don Baltasar's intentions. He could hardly find a better corner to hide her in; for it is in the very heart of the mountains, far from any town, and, well as I know Navarre, I never saw the place till this time. So I *should* think it likely she is still there, unless he has taken her to France, or forced her to marry him."

"Never!" cried Herrera, violently; "he would not dare; she would never consent. Listen, Paco—could you guide me to that convent?"

"Certainly I could," answered the muleteer, greatly surprised, "as far as knowing the road goes; but the country swarms with Carlist troops; and even if we could sneak round Eraso's army, we should be trapped by some guerilla party."

"There must be paths over the mountains," exclaimed

Herrera, with the painful eagerness of a man catching at straws ; "paths unfrequented, almost unknown, except to fellows like you, who have spent their lives amongst them. Over those you can—you must, conduct me."

"I will try it, Don Luis, willingly," replied Paco, moved by Herrera's agony. "I will try it if you choose ; but I would not give a *peseta* for our lives. Hundreds of the Carlists know every mountain pass and ravine as well as I do. The chances will be all against us."

"We could lie concealed in the day," continued Herrera, pursuing the train of his thoughts, and scarce hearing the muleteer's observations. "A small party of infantry—twenty picked men will be enough—the convent surprised at nightfall, and before morning, by a forced march, we reach a Christino garrison. I will try it, by Heaven ! at all risks. Paco, wait my return."

And before the muleteer had time to reply, the impetuous young man snatched his horse's bridle from his hand, sprang into the saddle, and, spurring the tired beast into a gallop, rode off in the direction of Artajona.

The motive of Herrera's abrupt departure was to prepare for the execution of a plan so wild and impracticable, that, in his cooler moments, it would never have suggested itself to him, although, in his present state of excitement, he fancied it perfectly feasible. He had determined to proceed at once to the General-in-chief, one of whose favourite officers he was, to acquaint him with what he had just learned, and entreat his permission to set out that very night with a few chosen men on an expedition into the heart of the Carlist country, the object of it being to rescue Rita from her captivity. For various reasons, he had the worst possible opinion of Don Baltasar, and so shocked and startled was he at hearing that the woman

to whom, in spite of their long separation, he was still devotedly and passionately attached, was in his power, that for the time he lost all coolness of judgment, and overlooked the numerous obstacles to his scheme. The rapid pace at which he rode, contributed to keep up the whirl and confusion of his ideas, and he reached the door of Cordova's quarters, without the impropriety and positive absurdity of his application at such a moment having once occurred to him.

The Christino commander had taken up his quarters in the house of one of the principal inhabitants of Artajona. At the time of Herrera's arrival, although it was past ten o'clock, all was bustle and movement in and about the extensive range of building; the stables crammed with horses, the General's escort loitering in the vestibule, orderly officers and aides-de-camp hurrying to and fro, bringing reports and conveying orders to the different regiments and brigades; peasants, probably spies, conversing in low earnest tones with officers of rank: here a party of soldiers drinking, there another group gambling, in a third place a row of sleepers stretched upon the hard ground, but soundly slumbering in spite of its hardness and of the surrounding din. Pushing his way through the crowd, Herrera ascended the stairs, and meeting an orderly at the top, inquired for the General's apartments. Before the soldier could reply, a door opened, a young aide-de-camp came out, and hurried towards Herrera. The two officers shook hands. The aide-de-camp was Mariano Torres, who had recently been appointed to the General's staff, upon which Herrera would also have been placed had he not preferred retaining command of his squadron.

"What brings you here, Luis?" said Torres.

"To see the General. I have a favour to ask him—

one which he *must* grant. Take me to him, Torres, instantly."

Struck by the wild and hurried manner of his friend, and by the discomposure manifest in his features, Mariano took his arm, and led him down the long corridor, which was dimly lighted by lanterns suspended against the wall, to his own room. "The General is particularly engaged," said he, "and I dare not disturb him; in five minutes I will inform him of your arrival. Meanwhile, what ails you, Luis? What has thus agitated you?"

Although chafing at the delay, Herrera could not but reply to this inquiry. In hurried and confused terms, he informed Torres of the news brought by Paco, and of the plan he had devised for the rescue of Rita. Thunderstruck at the temerity of the project, Torres undertook, but at first with small success, to convince Herrera of its impracticability, and induce him to abandon it at least for the time.

"How can you expect," he said, "ever to reach the convent you have described? In front is the Carlist army; on all sides are bands of armed peasants. You will throw away your own life without a chance of accomplishing your object."

"Don't speak to me of life!" exclaimed Herrera, impetuously interrupting him; "it is valueless. Spare your arguments, all you can urge is in vain. Come what may, and at any risk, I make the attempt. Every hour is a year of torture whilst Rita is in the power of that villain."

"Much good it will do her," replied Torres, "to have you killed in her service. As to her rescue, it is out of the question as you propose. You will inevitably be shot or taken prisoner. Take patience, and wait a few days, something may be done. This Baltasar, there can be little doubt,

is with the army in our front, and his prisoner must therefore be free from his persecutions. Besides, admitting that your project had a shadow of common sense, how can you suppose that on the eve of a battle against superior numbers, the General will spare even a score of men from the ranks of his army?"

"He *will* spare them, for me," cried Herrera. "He has known me through the war: I have fought by his side; more than once he has thanked me for my services, and promised to reward them. Let him grant me this request and I will die for him to-morrow."

"You would be likely enough to die if he did grant it," replied Torres; "so it is lucky he won't."

"We will see that," said Herrera impatiently. "This is idle talk and waste of time. You are not my friend, Mariano, thus to detain me. The five minutes have twice elapsed. Take me at once to the General."

"I will take you to him, if you insist upon it," answered Torres. "Hear me one minute longer. What will be said to-morrow, when we advance against the enemy, and Luis Herrera is wanting at his post; when it is known that he has left the camp by night, on his own private business, only a few hours before a battle, which all agree will be bloody and perhaps decisive. His advancement, although nobly deserved, has been rapid. Many envy him, and will not fail to attribute his absence to causes by which he is incapable of being influenced. It will be pleasant for his friends to hear slanderous tongues busy with his good name."

Mariano had at last touched the right chord, and this, his final argument, strongly impressed Herrera. What no consideration of personal danger could accomplish, the dread of an imputation upon his honour, although it might be uttered

but by one or two enemies, and disbelieved by a thousand friends, went far to effect. Moreover, during the quarter of an hour passed with Torres, his thoughts had become in some degree collected, and the truth of the aid-de-camp's observations as to the Quixotism and utter madness of his scheme now dawned upon him. He hesitated, and was silent. Torres saw his advantage, and hastened to follow it up.

"Hear me, Luis," said he. "You have ever found me bend to your opinion, but now, you are in no state to judge for yourself. For once then, be guided by me, and return to your squadron. To-morrow's fight will make a mighty difference. If we gain the day—and we are sure to do so—we shall advance to Pampeluna, and you will be at a comparatively short distance from the convent. Then, indeed, when the Carlists are scattered and dispirited by defeat, your scheme may be executed, and then, but only then, will you get permission to attempt it. I will accompany you if you wish it, and we will get some guerilla leader, skilled in such hazardous expeditions, to join us with his band."

By these and similar arguments, did Torres finally prevail with Herrera to abandon his project until after the approaching action. Even then, and should the victory be complete and in favour of the Christinos, Mariano was doubtful whether the dangerous excursion could be attempted, but in the interim Herrera would have time to reflect, and Torres hoped he might be induced entirely to give it up. He himself, a light-hearted devil-may-care fellow, taking life as it came, and with a gentle spice of egotism in his character, was unsusceptible of such an attachment as that of Herrera for Rita, and, being unsusceptible, he could not understand it. The soldier's maxim of letting a new love drive out the old one, when-

ever a change of garrison or other cause renders it advisable, was what he practised, and would have wished his friend also to adopt. He was unable to comprehend Herrera's deeply-rooted and unselfish love, which had grown with him from boyhood, had borne up against crosses and discouragements, and which time, although it might prove its hopelessness, could never entirely obliterate.

"Time," thought Torres, as he returned to his room, after seeing Herrera mount his horse and ride away, "is a great healer of Cupid's wounds; particularly a busy time like this. A fight one day and a carouse the next, have cured many an honest fellow of the heartache. Herrera is pretty sure of one half the remedy, although he may scarcely be induced to try the other. Well, *qui vivra verra*—I have brought him to his senses for the present, and there'd be small use in bothering about the future, when, by this time to-morrow, half of us may be food for ravens."

And with this philosophical reflection, the *insouciant* aide-de-camp threw himself upon his bed, to sleep as soundly as if the next day's sun were to shine upon a feast instead of a fray.

Midnight was at hand when Herrera reached the bivouac, which had now assumed a character of repose very different from the bustle reigning there when he left it. The fires blazed far less brightly, and some, neglected by the soldiers who slept around them, had dwindled into heaps of ashes, over which a puff of the night-breeze every now and then brought a red glow, driving at the same time a long train of sparks into the faces of the neighbouring sleepers. There was no more chattering or singing; the distant shots had ceased, the musicians had laid aside their instruments, and shared the general repose; the only sounds that broke the stillness were the distant challenging from the out-post, the

tramp of the sentry faintly audible upon the turf, the rattling of the collar chain of some restless charger, or the snore of the sleeping soldiery. Restoring his horse to Paco, whom he found waiting beside the watch-fire, Herrera desired him to remain there till morning, and wrapping himself in his cloak, lay down upon the grass, to court a slumber of which anxious and uneasy thoughts long debarred his eyelids.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

“ A la lid, nacionales valientes !
Al combate á la gloria volad !
Guerra y muerte á tiranos y esclavos,
Guerra y despues habra paz ! ”

Himno de Valladolid.

It was not yet daybreak, on the 16th of July, 1835, when the stillness, which during the previous four or five hours had reigned undisturbed in the quiet streets of Artajona, was broken by the clang of the *diana*. But a few notes of the call had issued from the brazen throats of bugle and trumpet, when a notable change took place in the appearance of the town. Lights, of which previously only a solitary one had here and there proceeded from the window of a guard-room, or of some early-rising orderly-sergeant, now glimmered in every casement ; the streets were still empty, save of the trumpeters, who stood at the corners, puffing manfully at their instruments ; but on all sides was audible a hum like that of a gigantic bee-hive, mingled with a slight clashing of arms, and with the neighing of numerous horses, who, like their masters, had heard and recognised the well-known sounds. Two or three minutes elapsed, and then doors were thrown open, and the deserted streets assumed a more lively appearance. Non-commissioned

officers, their squad-rolls in their hands, took station in front of the houses where their men were billeted; in the stables, dragoons lighted greasy iron lamps, and, suspending them against the wall, fed and saddled their horses; the shutters of the wine-houses were taken down, and drowsy, nightcapped *taberneros* busied themselves in distributing to innumerable applicants the tiny glassful of *anisado*, which, during the whole twenty-four hours, is often the sole spirituous indulgence permitted himself by the sober Spanish soldier. A few more minutes passed; the *reveillé* ceased to sound, and on the principal square of the town a strong military band played, with exquisite skill and unison, the beautiful and warlike air of the hymn of Valladolid.

“A la lid, nacionales valientes!

Al combate, á la gloria volad!”

“To the strife, brave nationals! to the strife, and to glory!” sang many a soldier, the martial words of the song recalled to his memory by the soul-stirring melody, as, buckling on sabre or shouldering musket, he hurried to the appointed parade. The houses and stables were now fast emptying, and the streets full. The monotonous “*Uno, dos,*” of the infantry, was drowned in the noise of the horses’ feet and the jingle of accoutrements of the cavalry-men clattering out of their stables. By the light of a few dingy lanterns, and by the stronger illumination from the windows, the battalions were seen assembled, resting on their arms. Presently they moved out of the town. Outside of Artajona, the right wing of the army, commanded by General Gurrea, formed up, and marched away in the direction of Mendigorria.

The sun had but just risen when this division, after driving in the Carlist cavalry pickets, which had been pushed to within half a league of Artajona, halted and took position

to the right of the high-road between that town and Mendigorria. The ground thus occupied is level, and nearly opposite to the centre of a line of low hills, which, after running for some distance parallel to the Arga, recedes at either extremity, thus forming the flattened arc of a circle, whose chord is the river. Between the hills, which are inconsiderable and of gradual slope, and the water, runs the high-road from Puente de la Reyna to Larraga; and in rear of their more southerly portion, known as La Corona, opposite to the place where the road from Artajona passes through a break in the ridge, are the town and bridge of Mendigorria. Upon these hills the Carlists, who had passed the night in the last-named town, now formed themselves, their main body upon the eastern slope, their reserves upon the western or reverse side. Their masses were not yet in position, when the Christino right came upon the ground, and for awhile, although the distance between the hostile forces was not great, no shot was fired on either side. By and by, however, the dark figures of the Carlist guerillas were seen racing down the hills; the Christino skirmishers advanced to meet them, and soon a sharp irregular fire of musketry, and the cloud of smoke which spread over the middle ground between the armies, announced that the fight, or at least the prelude to it, had begun. This desultory contest was of short duration. Several Carlist battalions moved forward, a gallant attack was made on the Christino position, and as gallantly repelled. Commanded by a brave and skilful officer, and favoured by a judicious choice of ground, the Queen's troops, although opposed to vastly superior numbers, and without their cavalry, which had remained with the reserve, repulsed repeated assaults, and held their own without serious loss, until, towards ten o'clock, the heads of columns

of the centre of the army, under the commander-in-chief himself, made their appearance from the direction of Artajona. Almost at the same time, the left wing, with Espartero at its head, arrived from Larraga, where it had slept. Some little manœuvring took place, and then the whole Christino army appeared formed up, Cordova on either side of the high-road, Espartero on his left, nearer to the Arga, Gurrea on his right. By a rather singular arrangement, the whole force of cavalry, under General Lopez, was left in reserve, considerably in rear of the left wing, and at a full mile and a half from the centre; with the exception of one squadron, which, as well as his habitual escort, had accompanied General Cordova. That squadron was commanded by Luis Herrera.

A stranger who, on the morning referred to, should, for the first time, have walked through the ranks of the Carlist army, would have found much that was curious and interesting to note. The whole disposable military force of what the Christinos called the Faction, was there assembled, and a motley crew it appeared. Had stout hearts and strong arms been as rare in their ranks as uniformity of garb and equipment, the struggle would hardly have been prolonged for four years after the date we write of. But it would be difficult to find, in any part of Europe, perhaps of the world, men of more hardy frame, and better calculated to make good soldiers, than those composing many of the Carlist battalions. Amongst them the Navarrese and Guipuzcoans were pre-eminent; sinewy, broad-chested, narrow-flanked fellows, of prodigious activity and capacity for enduring fatigue. The Guipuzcoans especially—in their short grey frocks and red trousers, their bare necks, the shirt-collar turned back over their shoulders, with bronzed faces and wiry mustaches; having leathern cartridge belts,

buckled tightly round their waists, and long bright-barrelled muskets in their hands—were the very *beau-idéal* of grenadiers. Beside these, the Biscayans and some of the Castilians, undersized and unsoldierly-looking, showed to much disadvantage. Other battalions were composed in great part of Christino prisoners, who, having had the choice given them between death and service under Don Carlos, had chosen the latter, but who now showed little stomach for a fight against their former friends. The whole of the Carlist cavalry, even then not very numerous, was also there. The grim-visaged priest Merino, ever the staunchest partisan of absolutism, bestrode his famous black horse, and headed a body of lancers as fierce and wild-looking as himself; Pascual Real, the dashing major of Ferdinand's guard, who, in former days, when he took his afternoon ride in the Madrid prado, drew all eyes upon him by the elegance of his horsemanship, marshalled the Alavese hussars; and, in a third place, the Navarrese squadrons had left the fat pastures of the valley of Echauri to be present at the expected fight, and were ranged under the orders of the young and gallant Manolin.

But whoever had the opportunity of observing the Carlist army on that day and a month previously, saw a mighty difference in the spirit pervading it. He who had been its soul, whose prestige gave confidence to the soldier, and whose acknowledged superiority of talent prevented rivalry amongst the chiefs, was now no more. His death had been followed by a reverse, the only really serious one the Carlists had yet encountered, and dissension already sprang up amongst the followers of the Pretender. Intrigue was at work, rival interests were brought into play; there was no longer amongst the officers that unity of purpose which alone could give the cause a chance of success; nor amongst the

men that unbounded confidence in their leader, which on so many occasions had rendered them invincible. The spring of '35 had been a season of triumph for the Carlists; the summer was to be one of disasters.

Subsequent events sufficiently proved that Cordova was not the man to command an army. Diplomacy was his forte; and he might also, as a general, claim some merit for combinations in the cabinet. It was during his command that the plan was formed for enclosing the Carlists within certain fortified limits, in hopes that they would exhaust the resources of the country, and with a view to preserve other provinces from the contagion of Carlism.* Great credit was given him for this scheme, which was carried out after many severe fights, and at great expense of life; but neither of the advantages expected from it was

* The blockade system, as it was called, much extolled at the time, did not prevent the occurrence of various Carlist expeditions into Castile and Arragon, any more than it hindered large bodies of rebels from establishing themselves, under Cabrera and others, in Catalonia and Arragon, where they held out till after the pacification of the Basque provinces. If any hope was really entertained of starving out the Biscayan and Navarrese Carlists, or even of inconveniencing them for supplies of food, it proved utterly fallacious. Although two-thirds of Navarre, nearly the whole of Guipuzcoa, and a very large portion of Alava and Biscay Proper, consist of mountains, so great is the fertility of the valleys, that the Carlists never, during the whole struggle, experienced a want of provisions, but were, on the contrary, usually far better rationed than the Christino troops; and, strange to say, the number of sheep and cattle existing at the end of the war, in the country occupied by the Carlists, was larger than at its commencement. Money was wanting—tobacco, so necessary to the Spanish soldier, was scarce and dear; but food was abundant, although the number of mouths to be fed was much greater, and of hands to till the ground far less, than in time of peace. This, too, in one of the most thickly populated districts of Spain, and in spite of frequent foraging and corn-burning expeditions undertaken by the Christinos into the Carlist districts, especially into the plains north of Vittoria and the valleys of southern Navarre.

ever realised. In the field, Cordova was not efficient ; he lacked resource and promptitude ; and the command of a division was the very utmost to which his military talents entitled him to aspire. As before mentioned, however, his confidence and pretensions were unbounded, his partisans numerous, and the event of this day's fight was such as greatly to increase the former, and raise the admiration of the latter.

It was eleven o'clock before the two armies were drawn up opposite to each other in order of battle, and even then neither party seemed inclined immediately to assume the offensive. Clouds of skirmishers were thrown out along the whole line, bodies of troops advanced to support them, the artillery began its thunder, but still a fight was for a short time avoided, and, like wary chess-players at the commencement of a game, the two Generals contented themselves with manœuvres. Presently, however, from the Carlist centre, a column of cavalry advanced, and, forming front, charged a regiment of the royal guard, the foremost of Cordova's division. The guards were broken, and suffered considerably ; those who escaped the sabres and lances of the horsemen being driven back, some to the centre and some upon the left wing. For a moment, the cavalry seemed disposed to push their advantage ; but the steady fire of several squares of infantry thinned their ranks, and in their turn they retreated in disorder. Scarcely had they rejoined the main body when the advance sounded along the whole Christino line, and the army moved forward to a general charge. At first the Carlists stood firm, and opened a tremendous fire upon the advancing line, but the gaps that it caused were speedily filled up ; the Christinos poured in one deadly volley, gave a fierce cheer, and rushed on with the bayonet. The Carlists wavered, their whole

army staggered to and fro ; first companies, then battalions disbanded themselves, and pressed in confusion to the rear ; at last the entire line gave way, and the numerous host, seized with a panic, commenced a hasty and tumultuous retreat. The reserves on the opposite side of the hill were broken by the stream of fugitives that poured down upon them ; the cavalry, who endeavoured to make a stand, were thrown into disorder, and pushed out of their ranks in the same manner. In vain did the Carlist officers exert themselves to restore order—imploring, threatening, even cutting at the soldiers with their swords. Here and there a battalion was induced to turn against the foe ; but such isolated efforts could do little to restore the fortune of the day. The triumphant tide of the Christinos rolled ever forwards ; the plunging fire of their artillery carried destruction into the ranks of the discomfited Carlists ; the rattling volleys of small arms, the clash of bayonets, the exulting shouts of the victors, the cries of anguish of the wounded, mingled in deafening discord. Amidst this confusion, a whole battalion of Carlists, the Third of Castile, formed originally of Christino prisoners, finding themselves about to be charged by a battalion of the guard, reversed their muskets, shouted, “ Viva Isabel ! ” and ranged themselves under the banners to which they had formerly belonged, taking with them as prisoners such of their officers as did not choose to follow their example. Generals Villareal and Sagastibelza, two of the bravest and most respected of the Carlist leaders, were severely wounded whilst striving to restore order and inspire their broken troops with fresh courage. Many other officers of rank fell dead upon the field whilst similarly engaged ; the panic was universal, the day irretrievably lost.

“ The cavalry ! the cavalry ! ” exclaimed a young man,

pressing forward into the *mêlée*. He wore a long, loose civilian's coat, a small oilskin-covered forage cap, and had for sole military insignia an embroidered sword-belt, sustaining the gilt scabbard of the sabre that flashed in his hand. His countenance was pale and rather sickly, his complexion fairer than is usual amongst Spaniards; a large silk cravat was rolled round his neck, and reached nearly to his ears, concealing, it was said, the ravages of disease. His charger was of surpassing beauty; a plumed and glittering staff rode around him; behind came a numerous escort.

"The cavalry! the cavalry!" repeated Cordova, for he it was. "Where is Lopez and the cavalry?"

But, save his own escort and Herrera's squadron, no cavalry was forthcoming. Lopez remained unpardonably inactive—for want of orders, as he afterwards said; but, under the circumstances, this was a poor excuse. The position of the Carlists had been, in the first instance, from the nature of the ground, scarcely attackable by horse, at least with any prospect of advantage; but now the want of that arm was great and obvious. Cordova's conduct in leaving his squadrons so far in the rear, is inexplicable. It was by unaccountable blunders of this sort, that he and others of the Christino generals drew upon themselves imputations of lukewarmness, and even of treachery.

An aide-de-camp galloped up to Herrera, whose squadron had been stationed with the reserve of the centre. His horse, an Isabella-coloured Andalusian, with silver mane and tail, of the kind called in Spain *Perla*, was soaked with sweat and grey with foam. The rider was a very young man, with large fiery black eyes, thin and martially-expressive features, and a small mustache shading his upper lip.

He was a marquis, of one of the noblest families in Spain. He seemed half mad with excitement.

"Forward with your squadron!" shouted he, soon as he came within earshot. The word was welcome to Herrera.

"Left wheel! forward! gallop!"

And, with the aide-de-camp at his side, he led his squadron along the Mendigorria road, which intersects the hills whence the Carlists were now being driven. He had nearly reached the level ground on the other side, when he caught sight of several companies of infantry, who made a desperate stand. Their colonel, a Navarrese of gigantic stature—his sword, which was broken in the middle, clutched firmly in his hand, his face streaming with blood from a slash across the forehead, his left arm hanging by his side, disabled by a severe wound—stood in front of his men, who had just repulsed the attack of some Christino infantry. On perceiving the cavalry, they showed symptoms of wavering.

"Steady!" roared the Colonel, knitting his bleeding brow. "The first who moves dies by my hand!"

In spite of the menace, two or three men stole away, hoping to leave the road unobserved. Upon one of them, the Colonel sprang like a tiger.

"*Cobarde! Muera!*" cried the frantic Carlist, cleaving the offender to the eyes with the fragment of his sword. The terrible example had its effect; the men stood firm, and opened a well-aimed fire on the advancing cavalry.

"*Jesus!*" exclaimed the young aide-de-camp. Herrera looked at him. His features were convulsed with pain. One more name which he uttered—it was that of a woman—reached Herrera's ears, and he fell from his saddle to the earth. The dragoons, unable to turn aside, trampled him under foot. It was no time for reflection. "Forward! forward!" was the cry, and the horsemen entered

the smoke. On the right of the Carlists, in front, stood their dauntless Colonel, waving his broken sabre, and shouting defiance. Firm as a rock he awaited the cavalry. Struck by his gallantry, Herrera wished to spare his life.

"*Rinde te!*" he cried; "yield!"

"*Jode te!*" was the coarse but energetic reply of the Carlist, as he dealt a blow which Herrera with difficulty parried. At the same moment a lance-thrust overthrew him. There were a few shouts of rage, a few cries for mercy; here and there a bayonet grated against a sabre—but there was scarcely a check in the speed; such of the infantry as stood to receive the charge were ridden over, and Herrera and his squadron swept onwards towards the bridge of Mendigorria.

Now it was that the Carlists felt the consequences of that enormous blunder in the choice of a position, which, either through ignorance or over-confidence, their generals had committed. With the Arga flowing immediately in their rear, not only was there no chance of rallying them, but their retreat was greatly embarrassed. One portion of the broken troops made for the bridge, and thronged over it in the wildest confusion, choking the avenue by their numbers; others rushed to the fords, higher up the stream, and, dashing into the water, many of them, ignorant of the shallow places, were drowned in the attempt to cross. Had the Christino cavalry been on the field when the rout began, the loss of the vanquished would have been prodigious; as it was, it was very severe. The Christino soldiery, burning to revenge former defeats, and having themselves suffered considerably at the commencement of the fight, were eager in the pursuit, and gave little quarter. In less than two hours from the beginning of the action, the country beyond the Arga was covered with fugitives, flying for their lives towards the mountains of Estella. Narrow were the

escapes of many upon that day. Don Carlos had been praying during the action in the church at Mendigorria; and so sudden was the overthrow of his army, that he himself was at one time in danger of capture. A Christino officer, according to a story current at the time, had come up with him, and actually stretched out his hand to grasp his collar, when a bullet struck him from his saddle.

Dashing over the bridge, Herrera and his squadron spurred in pursuit. Their horses were fresh, and they soon found themselves amongst the foremost, when suddenly a body of cavalry, which, although retiring, kept together and exerted itself to cover the retreat, faced about, and showed a disposition to wait their arrival. The Carlists were superior in numbers, but that Herrera neither saw nor cared for; and, rejoicing at the prospect of opposition to overcome, he waved his sword and cheered on his men. At exactly the same moment the hostile squadrons entered a large field, and thundered to the encounter, pounding the dry clods beneath their horses' hoofs, and raising a cloud of dust, through which the lance-points sparkled in the sunlight, and the fierce excited features of the men were dimly visible. Nearer they came, and nearer; a shout, a crash, one or two shrill cries of anguish—a score of men and horses rolled upon the ground, the others passed through each others' ranks, and then again turning, commenced a furious hand-to-hand contest. The leader of the Carlists, a dark-browed, powerful man, singled out Herrera for a fierce attack. The fight, however, lasted but a few moments, and was yet undecided when the Christino infantry came up. A few of the surviving Carlists fled, but the majority, including their Colonel, were surrounded and made prisoners. They were sent to the rear with an escort, and the chase continued.

It was nightfall before the pursuit entirely ceased, and some hours later before Herrera and his dragoons, who in the flush of victory forgot fatigue, arrived at Puente de la Reyna, where, and at Mendigorria, the Christino army took up their quarters. Without troubling himself to demand a billet, Herrera repaired to an inn, where he was fortunate enough to obtain a bed—no easy matter in the crowded state of the town. The day had been so busy, that he had had little time to reflect further on the intelligence brought by Paco, of whom he had heard nothing since morning. And now, so harassed and exhausted was he by exertion and excitement, that even anxious thoughts were insufficient to deprive him of the refreshing slumber of which he stood in such great need.

The morning sun shone brightly through the half-closed shutters of his apartment, when Herrera was awakened by the entrance of Paco. In the street without was a great noise and bustle; and, fearful of having slept too long, he sprang from his bed and began hastily to dress. Without a word, Paco threw open the window and beckoned to him. He looked out. In front of the inn was an open square, now crowded with men and horses. A large body of troops were drawn up under arms, officers were assembled in groups, discussing the victory of the preceding day; and in the centre of the square, surrounded by a strong guard, stood several hundred Carlist prisoners. On one side of these were collected the captured horses both of men and officers, for the most part just as they had been taken, saddled and bridled, their coats caked with dry sweat. Paco drew Herrera's attention to a man in officer's uniform, who stood, with folded arms and surly dogged looks, in the front rank of the prisoners. His eyes were

fixed upon the ground, and he only occasionally raised them to cast stern vindictive glances at a party of officers of the Christino guards, who stood at a short distance in his front, observing him with some curiosity.

"You see yonder colonel?" said Paco to Herrera. "Do you know him?"

"Not I," replied Herrera. "Yet now I look again—yes. He is one of my prisoners of yesterday. He commanded a body of cavalry which charged us."

"Likely, likely," said Paco. "Do you know his name?"

"How should I?"

"I will tell it you. It is Baltasar de Villabuena."

Herrera uttered an exclamation of surprise. "Impossible!" said he.

"Certain; I have seen him too often to mistake."

Herrera made no reply. His hasty toilet finished, he bade Paco remain where he was, and descended to the street. He approached the group of guardsmen already mentioned.

"Your next move, gentlemen?" said he.

"To Pampeluna with the prisoners. A reconnoissance *en force* has gone out, but it may go far, I expect, before meeting a Carlist. They are completely broken, and at this moment I doubt if there is one within a day's march."

"Yes," said another officer, "they are far enough off, if still running. Caremba! what legs the fellows have! We caught a few, though, yesterday, in spite of their powdering along. Old acquaintances, too, some of them."

"Yes; fellows who have served and marched side by side with us. Look there, for instance; do you see that sullen, black-looking dog squinting at us with such a friendly expression?"

"Who is he?" inquired Herrera.

"Baltasar de Villabuena, an old captain of ours before the war. He resigned when Zumalacarregui took the field, and joined the Carlists, and it seems they've made him a colonel. A surly, ill-conditioned cur he always was, or we should not stand here without a word of kindness or consolation to offer him."

To the surprise of the guardsmen, Herrera, before the officer had done speaking, walked up to the prisoner in question.

"Colonel Villabuena?" said he, slightly touching his cap.

"That is my name," replied the prisoner sullenly.

"We met yesterday, I believe," said Herrera, with cold politeness. "If I am not mistaken, you commanded a squadron that charged mine in the early part of the retreat."

Baltasar nodded assent.

"Is your horse amongst those yonder?"

"It is," replied Baltasar, who, without comprehending the drift of these questions, began to entertain hopes that his rank and former comradeship with many officers of the Christino army were about to obtain him an indulgence rarely accorded, during that war, to prisoners of any grade—the captured Carlists being looked upon and treated by their adversaries rather as rebels and malefactors than as prisoners of war. He imagined that his horse was about to be restored to him, and that he would be allowed to ride to Pampeluna.

"Yonder bay stallion," said he, "with a black sheepskin on the saddle, is mine."

Herrera spoke a few words to the officer on guard over the prisoners, and returned to Baltasar.

"You will please to accompany me," said he.

Baltasar complied, and captive and captor advanced to the horses.

"This is mine," said Colonel Villabuena, laying his hand upon the neck of a powerful bay charger.

Without another word, Herrera raised the sheepskin covering the holsters, and withdrew from them a brace of pistols, which he carefully examined. They were handsomely mounted, long-barrelled, with a small smooth bore, and their butts were inlaid with a silver plate, upon which a coronet and the initials E. de V. were engraved.

"These pistols, I presume, are also yours."

"They are so," was the answer.

"You will observe, sir," continued Herrera, showing the pistols to the officer on guard, who had followed him, "that I have taken these pistols from the holsters of this officer, Colonel Baltasar de Villabuena, who acknowledges them to be his. Look at them well ; you may have to recognise them on a future day. I shall forthwith explain to the General-in-chief my motives for taking possession of them."

The officer received the pistols, examined them carefully, and returned them to Herrera. Baltasar looked on with a perplexed and uneasy air. Just then the brigadier, who commanded the column proceeding to Pampeluna, rode into the plaza. The drums beat, and the troops stood to their arms.

"Return to your place," said Herrera, sternly, to the prisoner. "We shall shortly meet again."

And whilst Baltasar, alike disappointed and astonished at the strange conduct of the Christino officer, resumed his place in the captive ranks, Herrera betook himself to the quarters of the Commander-in-chief.

This time Torres made no difficulty about introducing his friend into the General's apartment. Cordova was lying

at length upon a sofa in a large cool room, a cigar in his mouth, a quantity of despatches on a table beside him, two or three aides-de-camp and secretaries writing in an adjoining chamber. He received Herrera kindly, complimented him on his conduct in the preceding day's fight, and informed him that particular mention had been made of him in his despatch to Madrid. After an interview of some duration, Herrera left the house, with leave of absence for a fortnight, signed by Cordova himself, in his pocket. Proceeding to the barracks, he made over the squadron to his second in command; and then, mounting his horse, attended by Paco, and followed by half-a-dozen dragoons, he took the road to the Ebro.

In a street of Logroño, not far from the entrance of the town, stands one of those substantial and antiquated dwellings, remnants of the middle ages, which are of no unfrequent occurrence in Spain, and whose massive construction seems to promise as many more centuries of existence as they have already seen. It is the property, and at times the abode, of the nobleman whose arms are displayed, elaborately carved on stone, above the wide portal—a nobleman belonging to that section of the Spanish aristocracy, who, putting aside old prejudices, willingly adhered to the more liberal and enlightened order of things to which the death of Ferdinand was the prelude. In a lofty and spacious apartment of this mansion, and on the evening of the first day after that of Herrera's departure from Puente de la Reyna, we find Count Villabuena reclining in an easy-chair, and busied with thoughts, which, it might be read upon his countenance, were of other than a pleasant character. Since last we saw him, full of life and strength, and still active and adventurous as a young man, encountering fatigues and dangers in the service of his

so-called sovereign, a great and sad change had taken place in the Count, and one scarcely less marked in his hopes and feelings. The wound received by him in the plains of Alava, although severe and highly dangerous, was not mortal ; and when Herrera sought his body with the intention of doing the last mournful honours to the protector of his youth, and father of his beloved Rita, he perceived, to his extreme joy, that life had not entirely fled. On a litter hastily and rudely constructed of boughs, the Count was conveyed to Vittoria, where he no sooner arrived, than by the anxious care of Herrera, half the surgeons in the town were summoned to his couch. For some days his life was in imminent peril ; but natural strength of constitution, and previous habits of temperance, triumphed over the wound, and over the conclave of Sangrados who had undertaken his case. The Count recovered, gradually it is true, and without a prospect of ever regaining his former firm health ; but still, to Herrera's delight, and owing in great measure to the care he lavished upon him, his life was at last pronounced entirely out of danger.

Upon arriving at Vittoria with his sorely wounded friend, duty had compelled Herrera to report his capture ; but although the prisoner was considered a most important one, his state was so hopeless, that Luis had little difficulty in obtaining permission to become his sole jailer, pledging himself to reproduce him in case he should recover. When the Count got better, and became aware of his position, he insisted upon Herrera's informing the authorities of his convalescence, and of his readiness to proceed to any place of confinement they might appoint. Herrera's high character and noble qualities had made him many friends, some of them persons of influence, and he now successfully exerted himself to obtain a favour which was probably never

before or afterwards conceded to a prisoner during the whole course of that war. Count Villabuena was allowed his parole, and was moreover told, that on pledging himself to retire to France, and to take no further share, direct or indirect, in the Carlist rebellion, he should obtain his release. One other condition was annexed to this. Two colonels of the Queen's army, prisoners with the Carlists, were to be given up in exchange for his liberty.

When these terms, so unexpectedly favourable, were communicated to the Count, he lost no time in addressing a letter to Don Carlos, informing him of his position, and requesting him to fulfil that portion of the terms depending on him, by liberating the Christino officers. With shattered health, he could not hope, he said, again to render his Majesty services worth the naming; his prayers would ever be for his success, but they were all he should be able to offer, even did an unconditional release permit him to rejoin his sovereign. In the same letter he implored Don Carlos to watch over the safety of his daughter, and to have her conducted to France under secure escort. This letter despatched, by the medium of a flag of truce, the Count sought and obtained permission to remove to the town of Logroño, where an old friend, the Marquis of Mendava, had offered him an asylum till his fate should be decided upon.

Long and anxiously did the Count await a reply to his letter, but weeks passed without his receiving it. Three days before the battle of Mendigorria, the Christino army passed through Logroño on its way northwards, and the Count had the pleasure of a brief visit from Herrera. A few hours after the troops had again marched away, a courier arrived from Vittoria, bringing the much wished-for answer. It was cold and laconic, written by one of the ministers of

Don Carlos. Regret was expressed for the Count's misfortune, but that regret was not sufficiently poignant to induce the liberation of two important prisoners, in order that a like favour might be extended to one who could no longer be of service to the Carlist cause.

Although enveloped in the verbiage and complimentary phrases which the Spanish language so abundantly supplies, the real meaning of the despatch was evident to Count Villabuena. Courtied when he could be of use, he was now, like a worthless fruit from which pulp and juice have been expressed, thrown aside and neglected. It was a bitter pang to his generous heart to meet such ingratitude from the Prince he had so much loved, and for whose sake he had made enormous sacrifices. To add to his grief, the only answer to his request concerning his daughter was a single line, informing him that she had left Segura several weeks previously, and that her place of abode was unknown.

Depressed and heart-sick, the Count lay back in his chair, shading his eyes with his hand, and musing painfully on the events of the preceding two years. His estates confiscated, his health destroyed, separated from his only surviving child, and her fate unknown to him, himself a prisoner—such were the results of his blind devotion to a worthless prince and a falling principle. Great, indeed, was the change which physical and mental suffering had wrought in the Conde de Villabuena. His form was bowed and emaciated, his cheek had lost its healthful tinge; his hair, in which, but a short three months previously, only a few silver threads were perceptible, telling of the decline of life rather than of its decay, now fell in grey locks around his sunken temples. For himself individually, the Count grieved not; he had done what he deemed his duty, and his

conscience was at rest ; but he mourned the ingratitude of his king and party, and, above all, his heart bled at the thought of his daughter, abandoned friendless and helpless amongst strangers. The news of the preceding day's battle had reached him, but he took small interest in it ; he foresaw that many more such fights would be fought, and countless lives be sacrificed, before peace would revisit his unhappy and distracted country.

From these gloomy reflections Count Villabuena was roused by the sudden opening of his door. The next instant his hand was clasped in that of Luis Herrera, who, hot with riding, dusty and travel-stained, gazed anxiously on the pale, care-worn countenance of his old and revered friend. On beholding Luis, a beam of pleasure lighted up the features of the Count.

"You, at least, are safe!" was his first exclamation. "Thank Heaven for that! I were indeed forlorn if aught happened to you."

There was an accent of unusually deep melancholy in the Count's voice which struck Herrera, and made him for an instant imagine that he had already received intelligence of his cousin's treachery, and of Rita's captivity. Convinced, however, by a moment's reflection, that it was impossible, he dreaded some new misfortune.

"You are dejected, sir," he said. "What has occurred again to grieve you?—The reverse sustained by your friends——"

"No, no," interrupted the Count, with a bitter smile—"not so. My friends, as you call them, care little for my poor sympathy. Luis, read this."

He held out the letter received from the secretary of Don Carlos.

"It was wisely said," continued the Count, when

Herrera had finished its perusal, “‘Put not your trust in princes.’ Thus am I rewarded for devotion and sacrifices. Harken to me, Luis. It matters little whether I wear out the short remnant of my days in captivity or in exile; but my daughter, my pure, my beautiful Rita, what will become of her—alas! what has become of her? My soul is racked with anxiety on her account, and I curse the folly and imprudence that led me to re-enter this devoted land. My child—my poor child!—can I forgive myself for periling your defenceless innocence in this accursed war!”

His nerves unstrung by illness, and overcome by his great affliction, the usually stern and unbending Villabuena bowed his head upon his hands and sobbed aloud. Inexpressibly touched by this outburst of grief in one to whose nature such weakness was so foreign, Herrera did his utmost to console and tranquillise his friend. The paroxysm was short, and the Count regained his former composure. Although dreading the effect of the communication, Herrera felt it absolutely necessary to impart at once the news brought by Paco. He proceeded accordingly in the task, and as cautiously as possible, softening the more painful parts, suggesting hopes which he himself could not feel, and speaking cheerfully of the probability of an early rescue. The Count bore the communication as one who could better sustain certain affliction than killing suspense.

“Something I know,” said he, when Herrera paused, “of the convent you mention, and still more of its abbess. Carmen de Forcadell was long celebrated, both at Madrid and in her native Andalusia, for her beauty and intrigues. Her husband was assassinated—by one of her lovers, as some said—and, within three years of his death, repenting, it was believed, of her dissolute life, she took the veil. Once, I know, Baltasar was her reputed lover; but whatever may

now be his influence over her, I cannot think she would allow my daughter to be ill treated within her walls. No, Herrera, the danger is, lest the villain remove my Rita, and place her where no shield may stand between her and his purposes."

"Do not fear it," replied Herrera, in his turn reassured by the Count's moderation. "Your cousin was taken in the action of the 16th, and is now prisoner at Pampeluna."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Count, his face brightening with satisfaction. "It is good news, indeed."

"Better than you even think, perhaps. You have preserved the ball extracted from your wound?"

"I have," replied the Count, "at your request. What of it?"

"So long," said Herrera, "as no advantage could be gained from my communication, I would not shock you with a statement that even now will cause you serious pain. You remember, sir, that at the time of receiving your wound you were a very short distance from me, and that your cousin was at a still less one from you, in your rear. As you advanced towards the intervening stream, my eyes, conducted by chance, or something better, fixed on your cousin, who at the moment drew a pistol from his holster. You were but a few paces from him, when I saw him deliberately—I could not be mistaken—deliberately vary his aim from myself to you. The pistol was fired—you fell from your horse, struck by his hand. You seem surprised. The deed was as inexplicable to me, until from your own lips I heard who the officer was—that there had been serious disagreement between you—that his temper was violent, and character bad. Coupled with what my own eyes saw, the bullet itself, far too small for a carbine ball, convinced me that it had proceeded from a pistol.

Instinctively, rather than from anticipation of its being hereafter useful, I requested you to preserve the ball, and to-day an extraordinary chance enables me to verify my suspicions. Let the bullet be now produced."

Astounded by what he heard, but still incredulous, the Count summoned his attendant.

"Bring me the bullet that I bade you keep," said the Count.

"And desire my orderly," added Herrera, "to bring the pistols he will find in my valise."

In a few moments both commands were obeyed. The bullet was of very small calibre, and, not having encountered any bone, had preserved its rotundity without even an indentation.

"Do you recognise these pistols?" said Herrera, showing the Count those taken from Baltasar's holsters. "This coronet and initials proclaim them to have been once your own."

"They were so," replied the Count, taking one of them in his hand—"a present to my cousin soon after he joined us. I remember them well; he carried them the day I was wounded."

"Behold!" said Herrera. He placed the bullet in the muzzle of the pistol, and it slid into the barrel, fitting there exactly. Shocked and confounded by this proof of his kinsman's villany, the Count remained sad and silent.

"You doubt no longer?" said Herrera.

"May it not have been accident?" said the Count, almost imploringly. "No Villabuena could commit so base a crime."

"None but he," said Herrera. "I watched him as he took his aim, not twenty paces from you. With half a

doubt, I would have bitten my tongue from my mouth before an accusation should have passed it against the man in whose favour I have indeed no cause to be prejudiced. Count Villabuena, the shot was fired with intent. For that I pledge my honour and salvation."

There was a pause.

"But my daughter," said the Count; "you forget her, Luis. She must be rescued. How does this fiend's imprisonment render that rescue easier?"

"Thus," replied Herrera. "Yesterday I had an interview with Cordova, and told him every thing; the abduction of Rita, and Baltasar's attempt on your life. Of the latter I engaged to furnish ample proofs. Cordova, as I expected, was indignant, and would have shot the offender had I urged the act. Upon reflection, however, he saw reasonable objections to a measure so opposed to the existing treaty for exchange of prisoners, and feared retaliation from the enemy. After some discussion, it was agreed that the proof of Baltasar's attempt upon your life should be submitted, and, if found satisfactory, that the prisoner should be placed at my disposal. In that event his liberty, nay, his life, will depend upon his writing to the convent, to desire the abbess to set Rita at liberty, and to provide for her safe-conduct into France. Meanwhile, Baltasar, by the General's order, remains in solitary confinement at Pampeluna."

"Good," said the Count approvingly.

"I had a threefold object in coming hither," continued Herrera. "To obtain proof of Baltasar's guilt, to comfort you with hopes of Rita's safety, and to take you with me to Pampeluna. Baltasar of course believes you dead; he will the more readily abandon his designs when he finds you still live."

“Rightly reasoned,” said the Count. “Why should we delay another instant? Your news, Herrera, has made me young and strong again.”

“We will set out to-morrow,” said Herrera. “Troops march at daybreak for Pampeluna, and we can avail ourselves of their escort.”

His hopes revived and energies restored by the intelligence Luis had brought, the Count would have preferred starting without a moment's delay; but Herrera, although not less impatient, insisted on waiting till next day. The principal force of the Carlists had been driven back into Western Navarre, but still the road to Pampeluna was not safe without a strong escort, and Herrera himself had incurred no small risk in following it as he had done, with only half-a-dozen dragoons. Count Villabuena yielded to his representations, and the following morning witnessed their departure.

Three days brought the Count and Herrera to Pampeluna, whither Cordova and his victorious army had preceded them. Count Villabuena had reckoned too much upon his lately recovered strength; and, although the marches had not been long, he reached Pampeluna in a very exhausted state. It was evening when they arrived, and so crowded was the town that they had some difficulty in obtaining quarters, which they at last found in the house of one of the principal tradesmen of the place. Leaving the Count to repose from his fatigues, Herrera went to visit Cordova, whom he informed of the positive certainty he had now obtained of Baltasar's culpability. The proofs of it might certainly, in a court of law, have been found insufficient, but Cordova took a military view of the case; his confidence in Herrera was great, his opinion of Baltasar, whom he had known in the service of

Ferdinand, very bad; and finally, the valid arguments adduced by Luis left him no moral doubt of the prisoner's guilt. He gave the necessary orders for the admission of Herrera and Count Villabuena into the prison. The next day, however, the Count was still so fatigued and unwell from the effects of his journey, that it was found necessary to call in a physician, who forbade his leaving the house. The Count's impatience, and the pressing nature of the matter in hand, would have led him to disregard the prohibition, and at once proceed to the prison, which was at the other extremity of the town, had not Herrera, to conciliate his friend's health with the necessity for prompt measures, proposed to have the prisoner brought to him. An order to that effect was readily granted by Cordova, and, under proper escort, Don Baltasar was conducted to the Count's quarters.

It would be erroneous to suppose, that, during the late war in Spain, adherents of Don Carlos were only to be found in the districts in which his standard was openly raised. In many or most of the towns best affected to the liberal cause, devoted partisans of the Pretender continued to reside, conforming to the established order of things, and therefore unmolested. In most instances their private opinions were suspected, in some actually known; but a few of them were so skilful in concealing their political bias and partialities, as to pass for steady and conscientious-favourers of the Queen's government. Here was one and no unimportant cause of the prolongation of the war—the number of spies thus harboured in the very heart of the Christino camp and councils. By these men intelligence was conveyed to the Carlists, projected enterprises were revealed, desertion amongst the soldiery, and disaffection amongst the people, stimulated and promoted. Many of these secretly-working agents were priests, but there was

scarcely a class of the population, from the noble to the peasant, and including both sexes, in which they were not to be found. Innumerable were the plans traversed by their unseen and rarely detectable influence. On many a dark night, when the band of Zurbano, El Mochuelo, or some other adventurous leader, issued noiselessly from a town, through gates opened expressly for their egress, to accomplish the surprise of a distant post or detachment, a light in some lofty window, of no suspicious appearance to the observer uninformed of its meaning, served as beacon to the Carlists, and warned them that danger was abroad. The Christinos returned empty-handed and disappointed from their fruitless expedition, cursing the treachery which, although they could not prove it, they were well assured was the cause of their failure.

One of the most active, but, at the same time, of the least suspected, of these subtle agents, was a certain Basilio Lopez, cloth-merchant in the city of Pampeluna. He was a man past the middle age, well to do in the world, married and with a family, and certainly, to all appearance, the last person to make or meddle in political intrigues of any kind, especially in such as might, by any possibility, peril his neck. Whoever had seen him, in his soberly cut coat, with his smooth-shaven, sleek, demure countenance and moderately rotund belly, leaning on the half-door of his Almacén de Paños, and witnessed his bland smile, as he stepped aside to give admission to customer or gossip, would have deemed the utmost extent of his plottings to be, how he should get his cloths a real cheaper or sell them at a real more than their market value. There was no speculation, it seemed, in that dull placid countenance, save what related to ells of cloth and steady money-getting. Beyond his business, a well-seasoned *puchero* and an evening game at loto, might be sup-

posed to fill up the waking hours and complete the occupations of the worthy cloth-dealer. His large, low-roofed, and somewhat gloomy shop was, like himself, of respectable and business-like aspect, as were also the two pale-faced, elderly clerks who busied themselves amongst innumerable rolls of cloth, the produce of French and Segovian looms. Above the shop was his dwelling-house, a strange, old-fashioned, many-roomed building, with immensely thick walls, long winding corridors, ending and beginning with short flights of steps, apartments paneled with dark worm-eaten wood, lofty ceilings, and queer quaintly-carved balconies. It was a section of a line of building forming half the side of a street, and which, in days of yore, had been a convent of monks. Its former inmates, as the story went, had been any thing but ascetics in their practices, and at last so high ran the scandal of their evil doings, that they were fain to leave Pampeluna and establish themselves in another house of their order, south of the Ebro. Some time afterwards the convent had been subdivided into dwelling-houses, and one of them had for many years past been in the occupation of Basilio the cloth-merchant. Inside and out, the houses retained much of their old conventual aspect, the only alterations that had been made consisting in the erection of partition walls, in the opening of a few additional doors and windows, and in the addition of balconies. One of the latter was well known to the younger portion of the officers in garrison at Pampeluna; for there, when the season premitted, the two pretty black-eyed daughters of Master Basilio were wont to sit, plying their needles with a diligence which did not prevent their sometimes casting a furtive glance into the street, and acknowledging the salutation of some passing acquaintance or military admirer of their graces and perfections.

In this house Herrera and the Count had their quarters, and thither, early upon the morrow of their arrival at Pampeluna, Baltasar was conducted. The passage through the streets of a Carlist prisoner, whose uniform denoted him to be of high rank, attracted a little crowd of children and of the idlers ever to be found in Spanish towns; and some of these loitered in front of the house after its door had closed behind Baltasar and his escort. The entrance of the prisoner did not pass unnoticed by Basilio Lopez, who was at his favourite post at the shop-door. His placid physiognomy testified no surprise at the appearance of such an unusual visitor; and no one, uninterested in observing him, would have noticed that, as Baltasar passed by, the cloth-merchant managed to catch his eye, and made a very slight, almost an imperceptible sign. It was detected by Baltasar, and served to complete his perplexity, which had already been raised to a high pitch by the different circumstances that had occurred during his brief captivity. He had first been puzzled by Herrera's conduct at Puente de la Reyna; the importance attached by the Christino officer to the possession and identification of his pistols was unaccountable to him. Then he could not understand why he was placed in a separate prison, and treated more as a criminal than as a prisoner of war, instead of sharing the captivity and usage of his brother officers. And now, to his further bewilderment, he was conducted to a dwelling-house, before entering which, a man, entirely unknown to him, made him one of the slight but significant signs by which the adherents of Don Carlos were wont to recognise each other. He had not yet recovered from this last surprise, when he was ushered into a room where three persons were assembled. One of these was an aide-de-camp of Cordova;

Herrera was another, and in the third, to his unutterable astonishment and consternation, Baltasar recognised Count Villabuena.

There was a moment's silence, during which the cousins gazed at each other; the Count sternly and reproachfully, Baltasar with dilated eye-balls and all the symptoms of one who mistrusts the evidence of his senses. But Baltasar was too old an offender, too hardened in crime and obdurate in character, to be long accessible to emotion of any kind. His intense selfishness caused his own interest and safety to be ever uppermost in his thoughts, and the first momentary shock over, he regained his presence of mind, and was ready to act his part. Affecting extreme delight, he advanced with extended hand towards the Count.

"Dare I believe my eyes?" he exclaimed. "A joyful surprise, indeed, cousin!"

"Silence, sir!" sternly interrupted the Count. "Dissimulation will not serve you. You are unmasked—your crimes known. Repent, and, if possible, atone them."

Baltasar recoiled with well-feigned astonishment.

"My crimes!" he indignantly repeated. "What is this, Count? Who accuses me—and of what?"

Without replying, Count Villabuena looked at Herrera, who approached the door and pronounced a name, at which Baltasar, in spite of his self-command, started and grew pale. Paco entered the apartment.

"Here," said the Count, "is one witness of your villany."

"And here another," said Herrera, lifting a handkerchief from the table and exhibiting Baltasar's pistols.

The Carlist colonel staggered back as if he had received a stunning blow. All that he had found inexplicable in the events of the last few days was now explained; he saw that he was entrapped, and that his offences were brought home to

him. With a look of deadly hate at Herrera and the Count, he folded his arms and stood doggedly silent.

In few words Herrera now informed Baltasar of the power vested in him by Cordova, and stated the condition on which he might yet escape deserved punishment. But Baltasar obstinately persisted in denying his crimes; nor were any threats sufficient to extort confession, or to prevail with him to write the desired letter to the abbess. Assuming the high tone of injured innocence, he scoffed at the evidence brought against him, and swore solemnly and deliberately that he was ignorant of Rita's captivity. Paco, he said, as a deserter, was undeserving of credit, and had forged an absurd tale in hope of reward. As to the pistols, nothing was easier than to cast a bullet to fit them, and he vehemently accused Herrera of having fabricated the account of his firing at his cousin. A violent and passionate discussion ensued, highly agitating to the Conde in his then weak and feverish state. Finding, at length, that all Herrera's menaces had no effect on Baltasar's sullen obstinacy, Count Villabuena, his heart wrung by suspense and anxiety, condescended to entreaty, and strove to touch some chord of good feeling, if, indeed, any still existed, in the bosom of his unworthy kinsman.

"Hear me, Baltasar," he said; "I would fain think the best I can of you. Let us waive the attempt on my life; no more shall be said of it. Gladly will I persuade myself that we have been mistaken; that my wound was the result of a chance shot either from you or your followers. Irregularly armed, one of them may have had pistols of the same calibre as yours. But my daughter, my dear poor Rita! Restore her, Baltasar, and all shall be forgotten. On that condition you have Herrera's word and mine that you shall be the very first prisoner exchanged.

Oh, Baltasar, do not drive to despair an old man, broken-hearted already! Think of days gone by, never to return; of your childhood, when you sat upon my knee; of your youth, when, in spite of difference of age, for a while we were companions and friends. Think of all this, Baltasar, and return not evil for good. Give me back my Rita, and receive my forgiveness, my thanks, my heartfelt gratitude. Your arm shall be stronger in the fight, your head calmer on your pillow, for the righteous and charitable act."

In the excitement of his fervent address, the Count had risen from his chair, and stood with arms extended, and eyes fixed upon the gloomy countenance of Baltasar. His lips quivering with emotion, his trembling voice, pale features, and long gray hair,—above all, the subject of his entreaties—a father pleading for the restoration of his only child—and his passionate manner of urging them, rendered the scene inexpressibly touching, and must have moved any but a heart of adamant. Such a one was that of Baltasar, who stood with bent brow and sneer upon his lip, cold, contemptuous, relentless.

"Brave talk!" he exclaimed, in his harshest and most brutal tones; "brave talk, indeed, of old friendship and the like! Was it through friendship that you forgot me in Ferdinand's time, when your interest might have advanced me? When you wanted me, I heard of you, but not before; and better for me had we never met. You lured me to join a hopeless cause, by promises broken as soon as claimed. You have ruined my prospects, treated me with studied scorn, and now you talk, forsooth, of old kindness and friendship, and sue—to me in chains—for mercy! It has come to that! The haughty Count Villabuena craves mercy at the hands of a prisoner! I answer you, I know

nothing of your daughter ; but I also tell you, Count, that if all yonder fellow's lies were truth, and I held the keys of her prison, I would wear out my life in the foulest dungeon sooner than resign them to you. But, pshaw ! she thinks not of you. She has found her protector, I'll warrant you. There are smart fellows and comely amongst the King's followers, and she won't have wanted for consolation."

It seemed as if Baltasar's defenceless condition was hardly to protect him from the instant punishment of his vile insinuation. With a deep oath, Herrera half drew his sword, and made a step towards the calumniator of his mistress. But his indignation, great though it was, was checked in its expression, and entirely lost sight of, owing to a sudden outbreak of furious and uncontrolled anger on the part of the Count. His face, till that moment so pale, became suffused with blood, till the veins seemed ready to burst ; his temples throbbed visibly, his eyes flashed, his lips grew livid, and his teeth chattered with fury.

"Villain !" he shouted, in a voice that momentarily regained all its power—"villain and liar ! Assassin, with what do you reproach me ? Why did I cast you off, and when ? Never till your own vices compelled me. What promise did I make and not keep ? Not one. Base traducer, disgrace to the name you bear ! so sure as there is a God in heaven, your misdeeds shall meet punishment here and hereafter !"

During this violent apostrophe, Baltasar, who, at Herrera's threatening movement, had glanced hurriedly around him as if seeking a weapon of defence, resumed his former attitude of indifference. Leaning against the wall, he stood with folded arms, and gazed with an air of insolent

hardihood at the Count, who had advanced close up to him, and who, carried away by his anger, shook his clenched hand in his cousin's face. Suddenly overcome and exhausted by the violence of his emotions, and by this agitating scene, the Count tottered, and would have fallen to the ground, had not Herrera and Torres hurried to his support. They placed him in his chair, into which he helplessly sank; his head fell back, the colour again left his cheeks, his eyes closed.

"He has fainted," cried Herrera.

The Count was indeed insensible.

"Air!" exclaimed Torres; "give him air!"

Herrera ran to the window and threw it open. Water was thrown upon the Count's face, but without reviving him; and his swoon was so deathlike, that for a moment his anxious friends feared that life had actually departed.

"Let him lie down," said Torres, looking around for a sofa. There was none in the room.

"Let us place him on his bed," cried Herrera. And, aided by Torres and Paco, he carefully raised the Count and carried him into an adjoining room, used as a bed-chamber. Baltasar remained in the same place which he had occupied during the whole time of the interview, on the side of the apartment furthest from the windows, and with his back against the wall.

It has already been said that Baltasar de Villabuena had few friends. In all Pampeluna there was probably not one man, even amongst his former comrades of the guard, who would have moved a step to serve or save him; and certainly, in the whole city, there were scarcely half a dozen persons who, through attachment to the Carlist cause, would have incurred risk to rescue one of its defenders. Most fortunately for Baltasar, it was in the house of one of those

rare but strenuous adherents of Don Carlos that he now found himself. Scarcely had the Count and his bearers passed through the doorway between the two rooms, when a slight noise close to him caused Baltasar to turn. A panel of the chamber-wall slid back, and the sleek rotund visage of the man who had exchanged signs with him as he entered the house, appeared at the aperture. His finger was on his lips, and his small gray eyes gleamed with an unusual expression of decision and vigilance. One lynx-like glance he cast into the apartment, and then, grasping Baltasar's arm, he drew, almost dragged him through the opening. The panel closed as noiselessly as it had opened.

One half minute elapsed, not more, and Herrera, who, in his care for the Count, had momentarily forgotten the prisoner, hurried back into the apartment. Astonished to find it empty, but incredulous of an escape, he ran to the antechamber. The soldiers of Baltasar's escort rose from the bench whereon they had seated themselves, and carried arms.

"And the prisoner?" cried Herrera.

They had not seen him. Herrera darted back into the sitting-room. Torres met him.

"Where is the prisoner?"

"Escaped!" cried Herrera. "The window! the window!"

They rushed to the open window. It was at the side of the house, and looked out upon a narrow street, having a dead wall for some distance along one side, and little used as a thoroughfare. At that moment not a living creature was to be seen in it. The height of the window from the ground did not exceed a dozen feet, offering an easy leap to a bold and active man, and one which, certainly, no one in Baltasar's circumstances would for a moment have

hesitated to take. Herrera threw himself over the balcony, and, dropping to the ground, ran off down a neighbouring lane, round the corner of which he fancied, on first reaching the window, that he saw the skirt of a man's coat disappear. Leaving the Count, who had regained consciousness, in charge of Paco, Torres hurried to give the alarm and cause an immediate pursuit.

But in vain, during the whole of that day, was diligent search made throughout the town for the fugitive Carlist. Every place where he was likely to conceal himself, the taverns and lower class of posadas, the parts of the town inhabited by doubtful and disreputable characters, the houses of several suspected Carlists, were in turn visited, but not a trace of Baltasar could be found, and night came without better success. Herrera was furious, and bitterly reproached himself with imprudence, in leaving the prisoner alone even for a moment. His chief hope, a very faint one, now was, that Baltasar would be detected when endeavouring to quit the town. Strict orders were given to the sentries at the gates, to observe all persons leaving Pampeluna, and to stop any of suspicious appearance, or who could not satisfactorily account for themselves.

The hour of noon, upon the day subsequent to Baltasar's disappearance, was near at hand, and the peasants who daily visited Pampeluna with the produce of their farms and orchards, already prepared to depart. The presence of Cordova's army, promising them a great accession of custom, and the temporary absence of the Carlist troops, who frequently prevented their visiting Christino towns with their merchandise, had caused an unusual concourse of country-people to Pampeluna during the few days that the army had been quartered there. Each morning,

scarcely were the gates opened when parties of peasants, and still more numerous ones of short-petticoated, brown-legged peasant women, entered the town, and, pausing upon the market-place, arranged the stores of fowls, fruit, vegetables, and similar rustic produce, which they had brought on mules and donkeys, or in baskets upon their heads. Long before the sun had attained a sufficient height to cast its beams into the broad cool-looking square upon which the market was held, a multitude of stalls had been erected, and were covered with luscious fruits and other choice products of the fertile soil of Navarre. Piles of figs bursting with ripeness; melons, green and yellow, rough and smooth; tomatas, scarlet and pulpy; grapes in glorious bunches of gold and purple; cackling poultry and passive rabbits; the whole intermingled with huge heaps of vegetables and nosegays of beautiful flowers, were displayed in wonderful profusion to the gaze of the admiring soldiers, who thronged to the scene of bustle. As the morning advanced, numerous maid-servants, trim, arch-looking damsels, with small, neatly-shod feet, basket on arm, and shading their complexion from the increasing heat under cotton parasols of ample dimensions, tripped deftly along between the rows of sellers, pausing here and there to bargain for fruit or fowl, and affecting not to hear the remarks of the soldiers, who lounged in their neighbourhood, and expressed their admiration by exclamations less choice than complimentary. The day wore on; the stalls were lightened, the baskets emptied, but the market became each moment more crowded. Parties of officers emerged from the coffee-houses, and strolled up and down, criticising the buxom forms and pretty faces of the peasant girls; here and there a lady's mantilla appeared amongst the throng

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of female heads, which for the most part were covered only with coloured handkerchiefs, or left entirely bare, protected but by black and redundant tresses, the boast of the Navarrese maidens. Catalonian wine-sellers, their queer-shaped kegs upon their backs, bartered their liquor for the copper coin of the thirsty soldiers; pedlars displayed their wares, and *sardineras* vaunted their fish; ballad-singers hawked about copies of patriotic songs; mahogany-coloured *gitanas* executed outlandish and not very decent dances; whilst here and there, in a quiet nook, an itinerant gaming-table keeper had erected his board, and proved that he, of all others, best knew how to seduce the scanty and hard-earned maravedis from the pockets of the pleasure-seeking soldiery.

But, the hour of noon now approached, and marketing was over for that day. The market-place, and its adjacent streets, so thronged a short time previously, became gradually deserted under the joint influence of the heat and the approaching dinner hour. The peasants, some of whom came from considerable distances, packed up their empty baskets, and, with lightened loads and heavy pockets, trudged down the streets leading to the town gates.

At one of these gates, leading out of the town in a northerly direction, several of the men on guard were assembled, amusing themselves at the expense of the departing peasantry, whose uncouth physiognomy and strange clownish appearance afforded abundant food for the quaint jokes and comical remarks of the soldiers. The market people were, for the most part, women, old men, and boys; the able-bodied men from the country around Pampeluna, having, with few exceptions, left their homes, either voluntarily or by compulsion, to take service in the Carlist ranks. Beneath the projecting portico of the

guard-house sat a sergeant, occupied, in obedience to orders given since the escape of Baltasar, in surveying the peasants passing with a keen and scrutinising glance. For some time, this military Cerberus found no object of suspicion in any of the passers-by. Lithe active lads, grayhaired old men, and women whose broad shoulders and brawny limbs might well have belonged to disguised dragoons, but who, nevertheless, were unmistakeably of the softer sex, made up the different groups which successively rode or walked through the gate. Gradually the departures became less numerous, and the sergeant less vigilant; he yawned, stretched himself in his chair, rolled up a delicate cigarrito between his large rough fingers, and lighting it, puffed away with an appearance of supreme beatitude.

"Small use watching," said he to a corporal. "The fellow's not likely to leave the town in broad daylight, with every body on the look-out for him."

"True," was the answer. "He'll have found a hiding-place in the house of some rascally Carlist. There are plenty in Pampeluna."

"Well," said the first speaker, "I'm tired of this, and shall punish my stomach no longer. Whilst I take my dinner, do you take my place. Stay, let yonder cabbage-carriers pass."

The peasants referred to by the sergeant, were a party of half-a-dozen women, and nearly as many lads and men, who just then showed themselves at the end of the street, coming towards the gate. Most of them were mounted on rough mountain ponies and jackasses, although three or four of the women trudged afoot, with pyramids of baskets balanced upon their heads, the perspiration streaming down their faces from the combined effects of the sun and their

load. The last of the party was a stout man, apparently some five-and-forty years of age, dressed in a jacket and breeches of coarse brown cloth, and seated sideways on a scraggy mule, in such a position that his back was to the guard-house as he passed it. On the opposite side of the animal hung a pannier, containing cabbages and other vegetables, the unsold residue of the rider's stock in trade. The peasant's legs, naked below the knee, were tanned by the sun to the same brown hue as his face and bare throat; his feet were sandalled, and above one of his ankles a soiled bandage was wrapped, apparently concealing a wound. A broad-brimmed felt hat shaded his half-closed eyes and dull stolid countenance, and the only thing that distinguished him from the generality of peasants was his hair, which was cut short behind, instead of hanging, according to the custom of the province, in long ragged locks over the coat collar.

Occupied with his cigar and gossip, the sergeant vouchsafed but a careless and cursory glance to this party, and they were passing on without hinderance, when, from a window of the guard-house, a voice ordered them to halt.

"How now, sergeant!" exclaimed the young ensign on guard. "What is the meaning of this? Why do these people pass without examination?"

The negligent sergeant rose hastily from his chair, and, assuming an attitude of respect, faltered an excuse.

"Peasants, sir; market-people."

The officer, who had been on guard since the preceding evening, had sat in his room, waiting the arrival of his dinner, which was to be sent to him from his quarters, and was rather behind time. The delay had put him out of temper.

"How can you tell that? You are cunning to know people without looking at them. Let them wait."

The next moment he issued from the guard-house, and approached the peasants.

"Your name?" said he, sharply, to the first of the party.

"José Samaniego," was the answer. "A poor *aldeano* from Artica, *para servir á vuestra señoría*. These are my wife and daughter."

The speaker was an old grayhaired man, with wrinkled features, and a stoop in his shoulders; and, notwithstanding a cunning twinkle in his eye, there was no mistaking him for any thing else than he asserted himself to be.

The officer turned from him, glanced at the rest of the party, and was about to let them pass, when his eye fell upon the sturdy, crop-headed peasant already referred to. He immediately approached him,

"Where do you come from?" said he, eyeing him with a look of suspicion.

The sole reply was a stare of stupid surprise. The officer repeated the question.

"From Berrioazar," answered the man, naming a village at a greater distance from Pampeluna than the one to which old Samaniego claimed to belong. And then, as if he supposed the officer inclined to become a customer, he reached over to his pannier and took out a basket of figs.

"Fine figs, your worship," said he, mixing execrably bad Spanish with Basque words. "*Muy barato*. You shall have them cheap."

When the man mentioned his place of abode, two or three of the women exchanged a quick glance of surprise; but this escaped the notice of the officer, who now looked hard in the peasant's face, which preserved its former expression of immovable and sleepy stupidity.

"Dismount," said the ensign.

The man pointed to his bandaged ankle ; but on a repetition of the order he obeyed, with a grimace of pain, and then stood on one leg, supporting himself against the mule.

"I shall detain this fellow," said the officer, after a moment's pause. "Take him to the guard-room."

Just then a respectable-looking, elderly citizen, on his return from a stroll outside the fortifications, walked past the guard-house. He stopped and shook hands with the young officer.

"Welcome to Pampeluna, Don Rafael!" he exclaimed. "Your regiment I knew was here, but could not believe you were with it, since I never before knew you neglect your old friends."

"No fault of mine, Señor Lopez," replied the officer. "Three days here, and not a minute's rest from guards and fatigue duty."

"Well, don't forget us ; Ignacia and Dolores look for you. Ah, Blas ! you here ? How's your leg, poor Blas ? Did you bring the birds I ordered ?"

These questions were addressed to the lame peasant, who replied by a grin of recognition, and an assurance that the birds in question had been duly delivered to his worship's servant.

"Very good," said Lopez. "Good morning, Don Rafael."

The young officer stopped him.

"You know this man, then, Señor Lopez ?" inquired the ensign.

"Know him ?—as I know you. Our poultry-man ; and if you will sup with us to-night, when you come off guard, you shall eat a fowl of his fattening."

"With pleasure," replied the ensign. "You may go," he added, turning to the peasant. "Let these people pass,

sergeant. May I be shot, Don Basilio,—if I didn't mean to detain your worthy poulterer on suspicion of his being a better man than he looked. There has been an escape, and a sharp watch is held to keep the runaway in the town. It would have been cruel, indeed, to stop the man who brings my supper. Ha, ha! a capital joke! Stopping my own supplies."

"A capital joke, indeed!" said Lopez, laughing heartily. "Well, good-bye, Don Rafael. We shall expect you to-night."

And the cloth-merchant walked away, his usual pleasant smile upon his placid face, whilst the peasants passed through the gate; and the officer, completely restored to good-humour by the prospect of a dainty supper and pleasant flirtation with Don Basilio's pretty daughters, proceeded to the discussion of his dinner, which just then made its appearance.

Crossing the river, the party of peasants who had met with this brief delay, rode along for a mile or more without a word being spoken amongst them. Presently they came to a place where three roads branched off, and here the lame peasant, who had continued to ride in rear of the others, separated from them, with an abrupt "Adios!" Old Samaniego looked round, and his shrivelled features puckered themselves into a comical smile.

"Is that your road to Berriojar, neighbour?" said he. "It is a new one if it be."

The person addressed cast a glance over his shoulder, and muttered an inaudible reply, at the same time thrusting his hand under the vegetables that half-filled his pannier.

"If you live in Berriojar, I live in heaven," said Samaniego. "But fear nothing from us. *Viva el Rey Carlos!*"

He burst into a shrill laugh, echoed by his companions,

and, quickening their pace, the party were presently out of sight. The lame peasant, who, as the reader will already have conjectured, was no other than Baltasar de Villabuena, rode on for some distance, till he came to an extensive copse fringing the base of a mountain. Riding in amongst the trees, he threw away his pannier, previously taking from it a large horse pistol concealed amongst its contents. He then stripped the bandage from his leg, bestrode his mule, and vigorously belabouring the beast with a stick torn from a tree, galloped away in the direction of the Carlist territory.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

THERE was a crowd and a clamour in the principal coffee-house of Pampeluna at nine o'clock on a July evening, that of the first day after Baltasar's escape from the town. The numerous tables were surrounded by officers of Cordova's army, still flushed with their recent victory, and eager to enjoy to the utmost a period of relaxation, which, for aught they knew, the next day might close. Great was the clattering of glasses and the consumption of ices and *refrescos*, rendered especially grateful by the extreme heat of the weather; long and loud were the peals of laughter that echoed through the apartments, and dense the clouds of tobacco smoke, which, in spite of open doors and windows, floated above the heads of the jovial assembly. In one room a party of *monté*-players, grouped round a baize-covered table, on which were displayed piles of gold and silver coin, and packs of Spanish cards, with their queer devices of horses, suns, and vases, were busied, notwithstanding the numerous general orders prohibiting gambling in the army, in increasing or getting rid of a small and recently made issue of pay. Here comparative stillness reigned, only broken by the monotonous voices of the bankers, or by an occasional angry ejaculation from some unlucky gamester who saw his last

dollar drawn into the vortex, without any means occurring to him whereby to replenish his empty pockets. The other rooms were thronged to suffocation; even the balconies were filled with idlers, leaning over the balustrade, puffing their cigars and listening to a band of amateur musicians, who performed a serenade, in honour of his late victory, under the windows of the commander-in-chief.

In a corner of the coffee-house two persons were seated, both of remarkable appearance, although in very different styles. One was a young man about six-and-twenty years old, low in stature and slightly built; his features regular, without beard, and his expression of countenance rather pleasing than otherwise. His dress was a short braided jacket, unbuttoned by reason of the sultriness of the evening, and disclosing a shirt of fine texture, and a coloured silk handkerchief tied loosely about his throat, which was round and moulded as that of a woman. His cavalry overalls were strapped and topped with leather, and had rows of large bright buttons down the sides; double-rowelled spurs were fixed to his boots, and on a chair beside him lay a foraging-cap and a light sabre. Although his features were small and delicately chiselled, there was great daring and decision in the thin, compressed lips, slightly expanded nostril, and keen gray eye; and when he smiled, which was but rarely, certain lines around his mouth gave a cruel, almost a savage look to his otherwise agreeable physiognomy. A Navarrese by birth, and of a roving and adventurous disposition, this man, at the commencement of the civil war, had espoused the cause of Don Carlos; but a violent quarrel with a superior officer, punished, as he considered, with undue severity, soon afterwards induced him to transfer his services to the Christinos. He raised a free corps, composed of Carlist deserters,

smugglers, and desperadoes of every description, and made war upon his former friends with unbounded vindictiveness and considerable success. At the period now referred to, he had already, by various well-planned and boldly-achieved expeditions, accomplished chiefly in the night-time, gained a high reputation, and the *sobriquet*, by which he was generally known, of El Mochuelo, or the Night Owl.

The man seated opposite to the partisan just described, was of a totally different stamp. Several inches taller than his companion, broad-shouldered and powerful, he had the careless weatherbeaten look of an old campaigner, equally ready to do his devoir in the field, or to enjoy temporary repose in snug quarters. A bushy beard covered the lower part of his face, which was further adorned with a purple scar reaching completely across one cheek, the result of a sabre-cut of no very ancient date. He wore a dragoon's uniform: his right arm, which rested on the table before him, was large and brawny, apparently well fitted to wield the ponderous sword that hung from his hip; but his left had been severed between wrist and elbow, and in its stead an iron hook protruded from the empty coat-cuff. On his right shoulder a single epaulet, with long silver bullion, marked his rank as that of lieutenant of free corps.

"I tell you I'm sick of it, Velasquez," cried the Mochuelo, striking the table impatiently with his fist. "Why do we idle in towns instead of following up our victory? When there's work to be done, do it at once, say I. If there's no sign of a move to-morrow, I shall try something by myself—that I'm determined."

"Can't say I'm so impatient," returned his companion. "Fighting is very well in its way, and I believe I take to it as kindly as most men; but a feast after a fray, that's

fair play and the soldier's privilege. But you are never easy without your foot's in the stirrup. Give the poor devils a day's rest; time to shake their feathers after their thrashing."

"Curse them!" cried the Mochuelo; "not an hour, if I could help it. They treated me like a dog, and my debt of ill-usage is not half paid. No! to-morrow I move out, come what may."

"And why not to-night, Mochuelo?" said a young staff-officer who had approached the table and overheard the last words of the revengeful guerilla. "It is yet early, the night is dark—why not at once?"

The Mochuelo sprang to his feet.

"Do you bring orders, Señor Torres?" said he in a low eager tone to the aide-de-camp. "All the better! Whither to go? In half an hour my men are ready."

"Not so fast, amigo," answered Mariano Torres, smiling at the guerilla's impatience. "It's no ordinary or easy expedition that I propose to you, nor need you undertake it unless you choose. I bring the General's authorisation, not his order. The risk is great, and the object a private one: but by accomplishing it you will lay my friend, Captain Herrera, and consequently myself, under deep obligation."

"I would gladly oblige Captain Herrera," said the Mochuelo, bowing to Luis, who accompanied Torres. "Velasquez once served in his squadron." And he pointed to his one-handed companion.

"You have forgotten Sergeant Velasquez, captain," said the latter. "He's got the epaulet at last, you see."

"I remember you well," replied Herrera, cordially shaking the hand of his former subordinate. "Your promo-

tion has been dearly purchased," added he, glancing at the mutilated limb; "and I am sure well deserved."

"No time for compliments, Señor," said the Mochuelo. "To business."

He again seated himself, and the others following his example, Herrera in few words exposed to the guerilla the nature of the projected expedition.

Notwithstanding the precautions taken to prevent Baltasar's departure from Pampeluna, precautions which, as the reader already knows, proved fruitless, Herrera, finding after a lapse of twenty-four hours that no tidings were obtained of the fugitive, resolved not to trust to the chance of his recapture, but at once to execute the plan formed when first he learned Rita's state of duance. This plan, it will be remembered, was to penetrate clandestinely, and with a small force, into the enemy's country, to surprise the convent and rescue his mistress. Impracticable when first devised at Artajona, the difficulties besetting the scheme, although diminished by the comparative proximity of Pampeluna to Rita's prison, still appeared almost insuperable. Could the expedition have commenced and terminated between sunset and sunrise, a party of active guerillas, well acquainted with the country and accustomed to such enterprises, might have accomplished it with only a moderate amount of danger; but, at that season of the year especially, a great part of the march would have to be made in broad daylight, through a district exclusively Carlist in population, and occupied by detachments and garrisons of the Pretender's troops. Indeed the risk was so great and manifest, the chances of success apparently so slender, that Cordova, when applied to by Herrera, at first positively refused his consent to so mad an expedition. He at last yielded to the young man's reiterated entreaties,

and even permitted Torres to accompany his friend, but would give them no troops of the line, saying that the Mochuelo might go, if willing. That he was so, the reader, after the glimpse given of the guerilla's daring character and impatience of inaction, will without difficulty conjecture. He acknowledged that the proposed expedition was most dangerous ; but confident in his own resources, and in the men under his command, he by no means despaired of its success. He should have liked, he said, to postpone it for a day or two in order to send out spies and ascertain the exact position of the Carlist troops ; but learning from Herrera how urgent it was to lose no time, and how fatal might be the delay of even a single day, he waived his objection, and agreed to start at once.

Although in the month of July, the night was overcast and dark when the little band who undertook this perilous service left the town of Pampeluna, and, passing through the outer fortifications, struck into the open country. It consisted of four horsemen and two to three hundred foot-soldiers—the latter almost without exception young men between twenty and thirty years of age, scarcely one of whom but might have been cited as an example of the high perfection of hardiness and activity to which the human frame can be brought by constant exposure to climate, by habits of exertion and endurance of fatigue. Long-limbed, muscular and wiry ; lightly clad in costumes remarkable for their picturesque and fantastical variety ; unencumbered by knapsacks, or by any baggage save a linen bag slung across the back, and containing rations for two days ; their long muskets over their shoulders ; belts, full of cartridges, and supporting bayonets, strapped tightly round their waists, they strode over hill and dale at a pace which kept the officers' horses at an amble. Fine studies

were they for a painter desirous of depicting banditti or guerillas. Their marked features and sunburnt cheeks were shaded by broad flat caps, from beneath which shining ringlets of black hair hung down to their bronzed necks. Reckless daring and contempt of danger were legible on every one of their countenances, accompanied, it is true, in some instances, by the expression of less laudable qualities. In the plain, and in a regular action, they might have been no match for more highly disciplined troops; but it was evident that as light infantry, and for mountain warfare, their qualifications were unsurpassed, if not unequalled, by any troops of any country.

Whilst a few of the guerillas acted as scouts, and, scattering themselves over the fields on either side the road, kept a sharp look-out for lurking foes and ambushed danger, the remainder moved onward in compact order and profound silence. In front came Herrera and Torres—the former thoughtful and anxious, the latter gay and sanguine as usual, ambling along as contentedly as if he were riding to a rendezvous with his mistress, instead of on an expedition whence his return was, to say the least, doubtful. Velasquez accompanied them, the bridle hooked on to his iron substitute for a hand, guiding his horse rather by leg than rein. At starting, the Mochuelo, who had had little time to mature a plan of operations, was grave and pre-occupied. For a while he rode in rear of his men, talking in low tones with Paco the muleteer, who accompanied the party, and with an old grim-visaged Frenchman, a sergeant in his corps, who, having but one eye, went by the name of El Tuerto. The result of his conversation with these two men seemed satisfactory, and, on taking his place at the head of the column, he told Herrera that he had good hopes of success. Silence, however, was the order

of the night, and he entered into no details. Paco and the Tuerto kept near him, apparently as guides. The former had testified no slight surprise on recognising his antagonist in the ball-court and the skirmish, in the new character of a commissioned officer; but respect for the epaulet, and a few friendly words addressed to him by Velasquez, dissipated his angry feelings, if such he still harboured, and he marched peaceably along beside the stirrup of his former opponent.

Steadily and silently the little party continued its march, winding like a dark and many-jointed snake over the inequalities of the ground, now disappearing in the hollow of a ravine, then toiling its way up rugged mountain sides. The road had long been abandoned, and only here and there the adventurous troop availed themselves of a cart track or country lane, whose deep ruts, however, rendered it but little preferable to the fields and waste land over which they at other times proceeded. After leaving the immediate vicinity of Pampeluna, and during several hours' march, but few words were exchanged between any of the party, and those were uttered in a cautious whisper. Although the pace was a killing one, no man had flagged or straggled; when at last, after completing a tortuous and rugged descent, the Mochuelo commanded a halt. The place where this occurred was in a narrow gorge between two lines of hills, or, it should rather be said, of mountains, for although their altitude was only here and there very considerable, their cragged and precipitous conformation and rocky material entitled them to the latter denomination. The passage between them was narrow but for a few hundred yards, after which, at either of its extremities, the mountains receded, and the valley opened into plains of some extent. To the right of the defile was a consider-

able tract of undulating and wooded country ; the level on the left extended to a less distance, before the hills, again closing in, restricted it within narrow limits.

The thick clouds which had veiled the sky during the early part of the night, had broken and dispersed ; the stars shone out and disclosed the outline of surrounding objects, assuming in the dim light all manner of fantastic forms. A cool wind, the forerunner of morning, swept across the valley, bringing pleasant refreshment to the heated soldiery, as they leaned upon their muskets and waited the orders of their chief. On either hand vedettes were advanced, keeping vigilant watch. El Mochuelo exchanged a few words with Paco and the Tuerto, and then turned to Herrera.

“ We are now,” said the guerilla, “ within a short league of the convent. It is in the valley beyond the mountains in our front. But we are also within less than an hour of day-break, and if we execute the surprise now, our return to Pampeluna will be scarcely possible. The country in our rear swarms with Carlists ; the first shot will bring overpowering numbers against us, and we shall be cut off. Our march has been rapid and fatiguing, and our chance of escape from fresh and unwearied troops would be small. Hazardous as it may appear to you, Captain Herrera, I have decided to pass the day in the neighbourhood of this spot, and to defer our visit to the convent till nightfall. Under cover of the darkness, and guided by these men,” he pointed to Paco and the old sergeant, “ our retreat will be comparatively easy, even should the enemy get the alarm, which I trust may be avoided. What say you to my plan ? ”

“ I am willing to be guided by you in the matter,” replied Herrera ; “ but this arrangement strikes me as extremely

hazardous. Where can three hundred men conceal themselves during a whole day, even in this wild and thinly peopled district, without imminent risk of discovery? Remember that a glimpse obtained of us by a passing peasant ensures our destruction. The forests and mountain passes are traversed by woodcutters and shepherds; the chances against us would be innumerable. Is it not better, without loss of time, to proceed to the convent, accomplish our object, and cut our way back to Pampeluna?"

"Not one of us would ever enter its gates," answered the Mochuelo. "It would be certain death to us all. But my plan is not so desperate as it seems. El Tuerto, here, is well acquainted with these mountains, and has had many a narrow escape amongst them whilst pursuing a less honest calling than his present one. He has told me of a place of concealment, where it is scarcely possible we should be discovered. At any rate we must leave this spot, or some early-rising peasant will stumble upon us. There is danger here."

At that moment, as if to confirm his last words, the note of a bugle, sounded apparently at less than a mile off, was borne upon the breeze to the ears of the adventurers.

"You hear," said the Mochuelo. "We must be gone, and quickly. There are cantonments of the enemy a little to our right. Call in the vedettes."

The order was obeyed, and, turning to the left, the guerillas quitted the defile and entered the smaller of the two valleys connected by it. Guided by the Tuerto, they presently approached a projecting hill, jutting out into the valley like some huge buttress placed there to support the mountain wall. It was of small elevation, but its sides were too perpendicular to be climbed, although that circumstance was partially concealed by the trees growing at its

base. Its summit also was covered with trees, and ivy clothed its rocky flanks. The guerillas turned into a wood extending some distance along the foot of the mountain, and made their way with difficulty through the closely planted trunks and thick brushwood. Presently the sound of falling water was audible, increasing in loudness as they proceeded, until its cause became visible in a cascade that splashed down the mountain side. A rocky pool received the foaming element, and fed a pellucid stream that soon disappeared amongst the trees, on its way to irrigate and fertilise the neighbouring fields. The water fell from the least elevated part of the mountain buttress, a height of seventy or eighty feet.

"This is the place," said El Tuerto to the Mochuelo. The latter nodded, and again ordering a halt, passed the word for the men to sit down upon the grass and observe the strictest silence. Divesting themselves of their belts and muskets, El Tuerto and Paco now approached a lofty tree growing at a short distance from the cascade, and whose upper boughs reached to the top of the precipice, and to the astonishment of Herrera and Torres, and indeed of all sufficiently near to distinguish their movements, began to climb its knotty and uneven trunk. In obedience, however, to the order for silence, no one questioned the Mochuelo, who alone seemed aware of the meaning of this manœuvre. Soon the two climbers reached the uppermost limbs of the gigantic tree, and creeping cautiously along them, landed safely at the top of the precipice. For an instant they were visible like dark shadows against the starry sky, and then they disappeared.

Scarcely five minutes had elapsed, when Herrera and Torres, who were nearest to the torrent, observed, to their great surprise, that the fall of water was of less volume.

They watched it, the diminution continued, and presently its bed remained bare and dry, with the exception of a slight trickling, which each moment lessened. At the same instant, Paco and El Tuerto re-appeared on the summit of the precipice, and began to descend the water-course. Herrera now saw that the latter was in fact a rude and irregular staircase, or rather a ladder of steps cut in the rocky surface, some perhaps naturally indented, but others evidently chiselled out by the hand of man. By means of these steps, a slippery but sufficient footing, it was not difficult for active men to ascend and descend in perfect safety. To increase the facility, wooden pegs had in various places been driven into the interstices of the rock; but when the water flowed, both these and the steps were so far concealed as not to attract notice.

Whilst Herrera gazed in mute astonishment at this singular staircase, the Mochuelo approached and tapped him on the shoulder.

"What say you to yonder hiding-place?" said he, pointing to the wooded platform above them. "Will they seek us there, think you? Could we not lie hidden for a week instead of a day?"

"If that be the only road to it," said Herrera, indicating the water-course, "we need hardly fear intruders. But can it not be approached from the mountains in rear?"

"Hardly," answered the Mochuelo, "as you shall see when there is light enough. We shall be safe there, Señor."

"And the horses?" said Herrera.

"Shall be cared for. We must risk their loss, although even that is not probable. But we shall have daylight directly. Time is precious."

It was as he said. Already a brightness was visible in the eastern sky, and the stars in that quarter of the heavens

began to fade and disappear. A word from the Mochuelo brought his men to their feet, and, slinging their muskets on their backs, they ascended the water-course. Meanwhile the horses were stripped of their equipments, and, taking hold of the halters, Paco and El Tuerto led them into the wood. A cord was lowered from the top of the precipice, and the saddles were drawn up. The men continued to ascend. Velasquez, on account of his mutilation, had some difficulty in climbing; but aided by the guerillas, he succeeded in reaching the top. The Mochuelo, after ascertaining by the report of his sergeants that all the men who had left Pampeluna with him were present, still stood with Herrera at the foot of the water-course, waiting for El Tuerto and Paco, who in a few minutes made their appearance.

“You have disposed of the horses?” said the Mochuelo.

The answer was in the affirmative. The horses had been securely tethered in the thickest part of the wood, and left with an ample feed of corn before them. It was most improbable that they should be discovered during the few hours they must remain there; but even if they were, their presence in that retired spot, whatever surprise it might awaken, could afford, in the absence of the saddles and trappings, no clue to their owners. To obviate any risk of their hoof-prints being traced, Paco had had the forethought to take them into the stream, and lead them for some distance along its shallow bed.

Upon reaching the top of the precipice, the first care of the Mochuelo was to assemble his men, and warn them of the necessity of perfect silence and extreme caution, upon which the lives of all depended. Under pain of severe punishment, he commanded them to avoid the slightest noise, and forbade their walking about, or leaving the place

assigned to them. This was under the shadow of some ancient trees, whose bushy crowns and branches were mingled and interlaced, so as to form a roof impervious to the sun, and almost to rain. Amongst them meandered one of two small streams, which, rising at different points of the adjacent mountains, flowed down to the platform, and uniting upon it, dashed over its brink, and formed the waterfall already described. For the present, at least, there was little need of the Mochuelo's command to ensure silence. Wearied by their rapid and toilsome march, the guerillas stretched themselves upon the grass, disposed to make amends by a morning nap for the vigilance and fatigues of the night.

The Mochuelo took Herrera's arm. "I will show you," he said, "that I have not overrated the security of our hiding-place."

Following the course of the rivulet, he led him to a place where a contrivance of great simplicity explained the sudden, and, as it had seemed, miraculous cessation of the waterfall. Just above the confluence of the two streams, which were neither wide nor deep, but which received, even in the summer months, an abundant supply of water from the mountain-springs, were a couple of roughly-fashioned sluice-gates, consisting of strong boards, sliding down between grooved posts, and which the strength of two men sufficed to remove or return to their places. Above these gates, trenches, now overgrown with grass and bushes, had been cut; so that when the sluices were closed, and the confined water rose to a certain height, it found a vent in another direction, and the original channel remained dry. The gates had been taken out and concealed amongst the brushwood, where Paco and El Tuerto had found them, and, by forcing them down the grooves, had stopped the

waterfall. They were now busied in removing them, and the Mochuelo and Herrera, on approaching the edge of the rock, found the torrent once more plashing down its accustomed bed, and the strange staircase, by which their ascent had been accomplished, concealed by its flow.

In reply to Herrera's inquiries as to the original authors of this curious contrivance, and the manner in which he had discovered it, the Mochuelo informed him that the Frenchman Roche, or El Tuerto, as his Spanish comrades styled him, had, previously to the war, been one of a band of outlaws, smugglers avowedly, and on occasion, as was affirmed, something worse, who for a considerable period had carried on their illegal avocations in the Navarrese Pyrenees and their contiguous ranges. Exposed to frequent pursuit, they had discovered and contrived hiding-places in various parts of the district they infested, and that now occupied by the guerillas was the one on the ingenuity of which they most prided themselves. To keep it secret they resorted thither only in extreme cases, usually contriving to arrive and depart in the night-time, and carefully avoided making any of the peasantry aware of its existence. The scanty population of the district, which consisted chiefly of rock and mountain, forest and waste land, favoured the preservation of their secret. At the commencement of the war the gang broke up, and its members joined various guerilla corps. Roche was for some time with the Carlists, but finding pay and plunder less plentiful than hard duty and long marches, he deserted, and put himself under the orders of the Mochuelo. The latter knew something of his previous history, and, on leaving Pampeluna, had consulted him as a person likely to possess valuable information concerning the wild district they were about to enter.

It seemed probable, from the appearance of the platform, that it had been unvisited, certainly unfrequented, since the dissolution of the honourable society to which El Tuerto had belonged. The grass was long and untrodden ; no woodman's axe had been busy with the trees ; save foxes and birds, no living creature had left traces of its presence. Only in one place Herrera and the Mochuelo discovered a number of sheep bones scattered amongst the long grass, remnants doubtless of some former banquet of the smugglers ; and not far off, in the hollow of a tree, serving as a niche, a small plaster figure of the Virgin and Child, that had once been painted, but of which the damp had long since strangely confounded the colours, told of a lingering devotional qualm on the part of the wild law-breakers.

Still keeping under shelter of the abundant foliage, the Mochuelo led his companion to the rear of the platform. There the mountains rose in precipices, and the most careful examination only showed one path—such a one as few besides a mountain-goat or a chamois-hunter would willingly have ventured upon—by which the lurking-place of the guerillas could on that side be approached. At the foot of this path, concealed amongst the bushes, crouched two sentries. At another point also, where, from the loftiest part of the platform, a view was obtained over the treetops up the defile between the mountains, other two watchers were stationed, stretched at length amongst the fern, and peering out through laurel bushes, with whose dark foliage their bronzed physiognomies were confounded beyond possibility of detection.

Fully satisfied of the security of their position, the Mochuelo and Herrera returned to their companions. The soldiers were for the most part asleep ; some few, whose appetite was even greater than their drowsiness, were

breaking their fast with black ration-bread, seasoned with an onion or sausage, and washed down, in the absence of better beverage, with draughts from the diamond-bright stream that rushed and tinkled past them. Torres, with his head on his saddle, was soundly sleeping; his dreams, to judge by the smile on his pleasant countenance, being of a more agreeable nature than the realities of his position. Velasquez had followed his example, and snored in a key that tempted his chief to awaken him, lest his nasal melody should be heard at too great a distance.

"Can you depend on your men?" said Herrera to the Mochuelo. "A desertion would be ruin, and yet the temptation is great. What would the man get who delivered the dreaded Mochuelo into the hands of the enemy?"

"Thanks and reward to-day, distrust and disgrace to-morrow. Even those who profit by treason, hate and despise the traitor. Besides, most of my fellows have been with the Carlists, and have little fancy to return thither. At the same time, as the majority of them are infernal scoundrels, I neglect no precaution. There are only two ways of leaving this platform without the certainty of breaking one's neck; the mountain-path, where two of my most devoted followers are on sentry, and the waterfall, where Paco and Roche have taken the first turn of guard. You may go to sleep, therefore, in all security, and it is what I advise you to do; for if our last night's work was severe, you may be sure that our next will be far worse. And so good-night, or rather good-morning." And, throwing himself on the grass, the guerilla, accustomed to snatch sleep at all hours, had his eyes shut in an instant.

Not less in want of repose, Herrera was hardly in a frame of mind to obtain it so easily. His reason, as

well as the consciousness that opposition would be unavailing, had induced him to agree to the delay deemed necessary by the Mochuelo, but he was not the less impatient and irritated at the inaction to which he saw himself condemned. If Baltasar had succeeded in leaving Pampeluna,—and the fruitlessness of the minute search made for him caused Herrera to fear that such was the case,—the twelve hours' delay might frustrate his hopes of liberating Rita. In the anticipation of a forward movement of Cordova's army, it was highly probable that Baltasar would remove her to some less accessible part of the Carlist country; perhaps, even, exasperated by the severity with which he had been treated at Pampeluna, and by the reproaches and menaces of the Count, he might proceed to extremities of which Herrera shuddered to think. The fevered and excited imagination of Luis conjured up the most maddening visions. He saw Rita dragged half-lifeless to the altar, compelled by atrocious menaces to place her hand in that of her abhorred kinsman, whilst a venal priest blessed the unholy union. He heard the cries of the trembling victim, imploring mercy from those who knew not the name, and calling on him, by whom she deemed herself deserted, for succour in her extremity. Tortured by these and similar imaginings, Herrera paced wildly to and fro in the gloom and silence of the forest, and accused himself of indifference and cowardice for yielding to the representations of the Mochuelo, plausible and weighty though they were, and for not proceeding at once, alone even, and unaided, to the assistance of the defenceless and beloved being, the uncertainty of whose fate thus racked his soul. Cooler reflection came to his aid, dissipating, or at least unveiling, these phantoms of a diseased fancy, and convincing him that precipitation could but ruin his last chance of

success. It would indeed, he felt, be impracticable to regain the Christino lines in broad daylight. Had his own life alone been at stake, that he had willingly set upon the hazard; or rather he would at once and joyfully have sacrificed it to restore Rita to the arms of her father. But the same conflict in which he perished, would ensure the return of Rita to her captivity and its terrible consequences. Moreover, it would have been an ungenerous requital of the promptness with which the Mochuelo had undertaken a most perilous enterprise—solely to oblige Herrera, and without a chance of advantage to himself—had he insisted upon his converting the risk into almost the certainty of destruction. Patience, then, was the only alternative; and, feeling the necessity of repose after the fatigues and agitation of the preceding night, Herrera lay down upon the ground, and physical exhaustion overcoming mental activity, he sank into an uneasy and broken slumber.

It was afternoon, and the valley and mountains glowed and glittered in the ardent sun-rays, although, within the bower of foliage where the guerillas had established themselves, all was cool and dark, when the Mochuelo awakened Herrera. With a vague fear of having slept too long, Luis started to his feet.

“Is it time to move?” he hurriedly demanded.

“Hush!” said the guerilla. “Come with me.”

One of the Mochuelo’s men stood by: he led the way to the lofty part of the platform whence a view of the defile was commanded. On approaching it, the two guerillas threw themselves upon their hands and knees, and making signs to Herrera to imitate them, crept forward till they gained the bushes fringing the precipice. Through these a small party of cavalry was visible, riding along the moun-

tain pass. By aid of his field-glass, Herrera was enabled almost to distinguish the features of the men. At the head of the detachment rode an officer, whose figure and general appearance he thought he recognised. A second glance confirmed his first impression. The leader of the troop was Baltasar de Villabuena.

Utterly bewildered by what he saw, Herrera turned to the Mochuelo.

"What are they?" he demanded, "and whither going?"

"You see what they are," answered the partisan.

"Carlist lancers. They are going, I fear, to the convent."

"How, to the convent? Does that road lead to it?"

"It does. At some distance up this valley the mountains sink, and there is a track over them practicable for horsemen; the same which we shall follow. When they reach the other side of the mountain they are within ten minutes' ride of the convent."

Herrera remained for a moment petrified by what he heard.

"There can be no doubt," he exclaimed, "they go to remove her. Baltasar is with them. We shall come too late. Mochuelo, you will no longer refuse to act, and that on the instant. We must surprise and destroy the detachment, then at once attack the convent and make our way to Pampeluna as best we may. If we wait till evening, the expedition might as well not have been attempted. It will be too late."

For a minute the Mochuelo stood silent and thoughtful, endeavouring to reconcile in his mind compliance with Herrera's passionately urged wishes, and the dictates of common prudence.

"It is impossible, Captain Herrera," said he. "If there

were only one chance in twenty in our favour I would attempt it, but there is not one in a thousand. If we leave this before evening, we shall never see to-morrow's sun. Much against my will, I must refuse your request."

The firm and decided tone of this refusal exasperated Herrera, already almost frantic at the thoughts of the new peril to which Rita was exposed. He lost all self-command, his lip curled with a smile of scorn, his look and tone expressed the most cutting contempt as he again addressed the Mochuelo.

"What!" cried he, "is this the renowned, the fearless guerilla, whose deeds have made him the dread of his foes and the admiration of his friends! This the daring soldier whom no peril deters, who now talks of danger, and calculates chances like a recruit or a woman! Oh, no! It is not the same, or if it be, his courage has left him, and cowardice has replaced daring."

On hearing himself thus unjustly and intemperately reproached, the Mochuelo turned very pale, and his left hand sunk down, seeking the hilt of his sabre. His two followers, on sentry among the bushes, who had not lost a word of the brief dialogue, turned their heads and glared savagely at the man who dared to accuse their leader of cowardice. One of them muttered a half-audible oath, and was about to spring to his feet, but a gesture from the Mochuelo checked him. The Carlist cavalry had now passed the defile, and were no longer visible from the platform. The Mochuelo turned away and walked in the direction of the bivouac, and Herrera mechanically followed, rage and despair in his heart. When out of earshot of the sentries, the guerilla paused, and, leaning his back against a tree, folded his arms on his breast. His features,

still pale, had assumed an expression of calm dignity, strongly contrasting with the flushed and agitated countenance of his companion.

"Señor de Herrera," said the Mochuelo, "you surprise me. Before two of my men you have taxed me with cowardice—fortunately they know me well enough to despise the accusation, and discipline will not suffer. Of the outrage to myself I say nothing. I make all allowance for your excited state. Many would repay your hard words by a shot or stab; I can afford to laugh at those who blame my forbearance. When next we meet the enemy, look where the fire is hottest, and you will confess that the names of coward and of the Mochuelo can never be coupled."

Touched by this manly address, and already ashamed of the intemperate words which mental suffering had wrung from him, Herrera held out his hand to the guerilla.

"Pardon me," he said; "pardon a man whose agony at seeing all he loves on earth about to be snatched away, has made him forget what is due to you and to himself. Misery is ever selfish; but believe me I am not ungrateful for your willing aid. All that human courage can accomplish I know you will do. But, alas! alas! this fatal though unavoidable delay is the ruin of all my hopes."

"Perhaps not!" said the Mochuelo cheeringly, cordially pressing Herrera's hand. "The horses we saw pass must be wearied by their mid-day march. Unsuspicious of danger, Baltasar will remain a while at the convent. The case is by no means so hopeless as you imagine. At any rate we will send a scout to keep an eye upon their movements. For that service Paco is the man."

Within ten minutes after this conversation, Paco left the

platform and commenced the ascent of the mountain. A contribution had been levied amongst the motley-habillimented guerillas to equip him in a manner unlikely to attract suspicion, and it was in the dress of a peasant of the province that he departed on his hazardous mission. Herrera would fain have undertaken it, but for the arguments of the Mochuelo and Torres, who convinced him how much more effectually it would be performed by the muleteer. Stationing himself at the foot of the mountain, he watched Paco, as, with extraordinary daring and activity, he climbed its rugged sides, availing himself, with intuitive skill and judgment, of every description of cover; creeping up water-courses and amongst bushes, and when compelled to expose himself to observation from the valley in his rear, bounding and striding along as if insensible alike to fatigue and to the scorching heat of the sun. In half the time that appeared necessary for the painful ascent, he disappeared over the summit of the mountain.

An hour elapsed, and Herrera, who had not ceased to watch for Paco's re-appearance, became impatient and uneasy. The muleteer had been ordered to go no further than was necessary to get a view of the convent, and that, El Tuerto affirmed, he would obtain within a few hundred yards of the mountain-top. The Mochuelo argued favourably from his prolonged absence, which proved, he said, that Baltasar's party were still at the convent, and that Paco was watching their movements. But when a second hour lagged by with like result, the guerilla, in his turn, became anxious; whilst Herrera made sure that Paco had ventured too far, and fallen into the hands of the enemy. In that case the Mochuelo feared that, to save his life, he might betray their hiding-place; but Luis's assurances of the stanch and faithful character of the muleteer, partly

dissipated his apprehensions. Nevertheless, additional vedettes were posted round the edge of the platform, the guerillas looked to their arms, and every precaution was taken against a sudden attack. If discovered, the Mochuelo said, they could none of them hope to escape; but the natural fortress they occupied would enable them to sell their lives at a dear rate.

In this state of suspense we will temporarily leave Herrera and his friends, to follow the footsteps of the muleteer. So rapid had been his ascent of the mountain, that when he reached its summit the Carlists had not yet completed their circuit, and entered the valley where the convent stood. With a feeling of huge satisfaction Paco looked down upon his former prison, and chuckled at the thought that he should soon have an opportunity of revenging himself for his sufferings within its walls. To make the most of his time before the appearance of Baltasar, he hastily descended the naked rock, and sought shelter amongst the bushes and straggling trees clothing the middle and lower slopes of the mountain. Thence he commanded a near view of the convent. No change was visible in the gray, ghostly-looking edifice; so still was every thing about it, that it might have been deemed uninhabited, but for the portress, who sat knitting in the shadow of the gateway, and for the occasional apparition of some ancient nun, showing her face, yellow and shrivelled as parchment, at a casement, or flitting with bowed head, and hands lost in the wide sleeves of her robe, across the spacious and solitary court. The red moss mantled the old walls, the bright green creepers dangled from their summits, the garden and vineyard covering the slope in front of the convent, teemed with vegetable life. From where he stood Paco could

discover the very point where he had entered the forest after his escape from the dungeon. As he gazed, it suddenly occurred to him that the same friendly shelter which had enabled him to leave the neighbourhood of the convent unperceived, put it in his power to return thither without detection. Bold to temerity, and forgetful of the Mochuelo's injunctions to avoid risk of discovery, Paco no sooner conceived the project than he executed it. The convent, it will be remembered, was situated at the extremity of the valley; the pass or dip in the surrounding hills, by which Baltasar and his companions would approach it, was to the east of the building; whereas Paco, by the short cut he had taken, found himself on the contrary or western side. Concealed amongst the trees, he moved stealthily but swiftly along, and was within a few hundred yards of the spot whence he proposed to reconnoitre the enemy's proceedings, when he heard the jingling noise of cavalry at the trot, and, looking through the branches, he saw Baltasar and his party sweep round the base of the little eminence and ascend the path leading to the convent gate. Baltasar alone entered the court; the troopers, about thirty in number, halted outside, and remained mounted. Paco plunged deeper into the forest; five more minutes completed his circuit, and he found himself, still concealed by the trees, within a few paces of the convent wall. Opposite to him was the window whence Rita had held her conversation with the gipsy; below it, Paco saw traces of the loophole through which he had escaped. The long grass and bushes had been cleared away, and the rusty grating which Paco had so easily removed was replaced by solid masonry. At none of the casements on that side of the convent was any person visible. Both shutters and windows were open; but Venetian blinds masked the

interior of the apartments from the view of the muleteer, who stood still and listened. Scarcely a minute elapsed, when a loud noise, as of a door dashed violently open, reached his ears. This was succeeded by a burst of furious vociferation in a voice which Paco knew to be that of Baltasar. Although his tones were loud, his utterance was so rapid and incoherent, the effect apparently of passion, that only a word here and there was intelligible to the muleteer, and those words were for the most part execrations. He seemed to lash himself into the most unbounded fury against some person who had entered the apartment in his company, and from the epithets he used, it was clear that that person was a woman. At first no reply was made to his violence, although Paco could distinguish that he put questions, and became more and more infuriated at the silence of her to whom they were addressed. Presently there was a momentary pause, and a female voice was heard. The accents were distinct though tremulous.

“Never!” it said—“never! You may murder me; but that, never!”

A blasphemy too horrible to transcribe, burst from the lips of Baltasar. A blow followed—a heavy, cruel, unmanly blow; there was a faint cry and the sound of a fall. Paco’s blood ran cold, he ground his teeth, and his hand played convulsively with the knife in his pocket. He looked up at the window as though he would have sprung to the assistance of the helpless victim of Baltasar’s barbarity. Again the room-door opened, and was again violently slammed. All was now silent in the chamber.

With heavy heart, and a countenance pale with horror and suppressed rage, Paco left the spot, and hastened to another, whence he could see the front of the convent. The Carlist horsemen were filing in at the gate. Looking

around him, Paco selected a lofty tree, easy of ascent; in an instant he was amongst its branches. Thence he commanded a view of the interior of the court. Baltasar was there, giving orders to his men, who unbridled and watered their horses at a fountain in the centre of the court. This done, they fed them, and cleansed the legs and bellies of the wearied animals from the sweat and dust. Bread and a skin of wine were presently brought out of the convent; and by these and other indications, Paco became convinced that a halt of some duration, for the purpose of rest and refreshment, was intended, although, from the non-removal of the saddles, it was evident that the Carlists would not pass the night there. Having now obtained all the information he could hope for, and far more than he had expected to get, the indefatigable muleteer set out on his return to the platform.

Meanwhile Paco's prolonged absence had caused Herrera and the Mochuelo most serious uneasiness; and as Luis knew him to be incapable of treachery, and vouched for his fidelity, they could only suppose that he had been taken prisoner, or had fallen and killed or maimed himself amongst the precipices he had to traverse. Sunset was near at hand, when Herrera, who continued to sweep the mountain ridge with his telescope, saw a man roll off the summit and start to his feet. It was Paco, who now bounded down the mountain with a speed and apparent recklessness that made those who watched his progress tremble for his neck. But the hardy fellow knew well what he did; his sure foot and practised eye served him well; and presently, reeking with sweat, and his hands and dress torn by rocks and brambles, he again stood amongst his friends. He was overwhelmed with inquiries concerning the result of his excursion, and gave a brief but

lucid account of all he had seen. Only, with a delicacy and consideration hardly to be expected in one so roughly nurtured, he suppressed the more painful details, merely saying that he had heard a voice, which he believed to be that of Rita, in animated conversation with Baltasar, who seemed endeavouring to persuade her to something which she steadily refused to do.

"We may yet be in time," exclaimed Herrera, his hopes revived by the muleteer's intelligence. And he looked anxiously at the Mochuelo.

"We will move at once," said the latter, replying to his look rather than to his words. "The sun is low. It will be dark before we reach the convent."

The flow of the waterfall was again stopped, and with the same caution that had marked all their movements since they left Pampeluna, the guerillas descended from their eyrie. Avoiding the open part of the valley, they kept within the forest, and reached the spot where the horses were concealed. They had not been meddled with; it was probable, indeed, that during the whole day Baltasar and his men were the only persons who had traversed the solitary valley. With strength restored by their long repose, the guerillas marched rapidly along, and soon found themselves in the vicinity of the convent. The sun had disappeared, leaving a red glow in the western sky; here and there a star shone out, and the heavens were of a transparent blue, excepting in the wind quarter, where the upper edge of a dense bank of cloud was visible. This, and the vapours, the result of the day's heat, which now rose in the hollows and low grounds, the Mochuelo contemplated with much satisfaction.

"'Tis a bright evening," he said, "but the night will be

dark. The better for our retreat, Captain Herrera. All is in our favour. Fortune befriends us."

Halting his men, the guerilla dismounted and advanced on foot till he came within sight of the convent. By the waning light he distinguished the figures of two or three soldiers lounging outside the gate. He returned to Herrera.

"They are still there," said he, "and cannot escape us. We will wait till it grows darker. The surprise will be more complete."

A few minutes were allowed to elapse, minutes that seemed hours to Herrera's impatience, and then a small party, guided by Paco and under command of Torres, moved off to gain the rear of the convent. At the same time the remainder of the guerillas approached the building on the eastern side, stealing along behind banks and trees. Unperceived they had commenced the ascent of the uncultivated slope, when their foremost files stumbled upon a Carlist soldier, who had sneaked down to the garden to make provision of the fruit that grew there in abundance. So silent were the movements of the guerillas—Herrera, Velasquez, and the Mochuelo going on foot, whilst their horses were led at some distance in the rear—that the Carlist was not aware of their approach till they were close to him, and he himself, hidden amongst the fruit-trees, had escaped their notice. He uttered a shout of surprise and terror; it was his last. A blow from the sabre of Velasquez brought him to the ground; the next instant three bayonets were in his body.

"Forward!" cried the Mochuelo, who saw that further caution was useless; and, closely followed by his men, he ran at the top of his speed towards the convent. But the

soldier's exclamation had given the alarm to a second Carlist, who had been waiting his comrade's return from the orchard. He saw the guerillas rush forward, sprang within the gate, shut and barred it. The Mochuelo came up in time to hear the last bolt drawn.

A great bustle and confusion were now audible in the court; the men hurrying to their horses, and questioning each other as to the cause of the alarm. The Mochuelo lost not an instant. Two of his men carried axes; he took one, Herrera the other, and they dealt furious blows upon the gate, which shook and splintered under their efforts. Within, Baltasar was heard, loud in oath, abusing his men for their cowardly panic. Not conceiving it possible that a party of Christinos should have advanced in broad daylight to so great a distance from their lines, he at first attributed the attack to some roving banditti, who had expected a rich prey, or at any rate an easy one, in the defenceless convent of nuns. He advanced to the gate.

"Scoundrels!" he exclaimed. "What means this violence? Desist, or I fire upon you!"

A low laugh from the guerillas replied to this menace. With incredible hardihood, he opened the wicket and looked out. The Mochuelo had forbidden his men to fire, but nevertheless, at the sight of Baltasar, a dozen muskets were raised.

"For your lives, not a shot!" cried the Mochuelo.

With his axe, Herrera made a furious blow at Baltasar, but the wicket was too small to admit the weapon, and the Carlist retreated into the interior of the court. The gate yielded, fairly hewn to pieces by the axes; a few more blows, and an opening was effected. The guerillas rushed with fixed bayonets into the court. It was deserted save by the horses. The doors and windows of the convent

were closely shut, and not a Carlist was to be seen. Just then several shots, fired in rear of the building, explained the solitude in its front. The besieged had endeavoured to escape by the outer windows, but had been prevented by Torres and his detachment. Foiled in this attempt, Baltasar now showed himself, raging like a wolf at bay, at a window above the convent door. Some of his men accompanied him, and fired their carbines at the assailants. By the Mochuelo's order, the fire was not returned. A few shots might be unheard or pass unnoticed by the Carlist troops in the vicinity, but the fire of his men would inevitably attract attention. In silence, therefore, and partly sheltered by a projecting portico, he and Herrera assailed the door with their axes. The obstacle was a slighter one than that which had already been overcome, and its demolition was likely to be more speedy. There were other doors in the wings of the convent that would perhaps have been yet more easily broken down; but in the uncertainty of what the interior partitions and defences might be, the Mochuelo preferred attacking the principal entrance. The Carlists continued to fire, and several of the guerillas were already killed; but soon, in anticipation of their stronghold being forced, the besieged ceased to defend themselves, and left the windows to seek concealment from the first fury of the foe. The door gave way, and the victorious Christinos, eager for booty, poured into the building. Herrera was the first to enter. He had ascertained from Paco the part of the convent where he might expect to find Rita; he darted up the stairs and along a gallery which ran completely round the first floor. The Mochuelo accompanied him. They were passing an open window, whence the Carlists had fired, when a loud shout was uttered by a detachment,

which, in obedience to orders, remained formed up in the court. The shout was followed by a few musket-shots. The Mochuelo stopped and looked out: Herrera, all his thoughts concentrated on one subject, still hurried on, but an exclamation from his companion arrested his steps.

"Escaped!" cried the Mochuelo.

"Escaped!" repeated Herrera, in his turn looking out; "Who?"

The question was answered by what he saw. Whilst the guerillas in the court-yard, resting upon their arms, gazed at the convent windows, now rapidly becoming illuminated, and envied their more fortunate comrades, who, to judge from the noise within, were unsparingly using their privileges as victors, a door in one of the projecting wings suddenly opened, and a man on horseback, with a woman before him on his saddle, dashed into the court. His spurs plunged in his charger's flanks, he rode through the astonished soldiers, and out at the gate. There was still enough light for Herrera to catch a glimpse of his figure before it disappeared below the brow of the slope. That glimpse told him that his hopes were again blasted. The horseman was Baltasar. There could be little doubt who was the companion of his flight.

In an instant Herrera was in the court. His horse stood near the gate; he leaped into the saddle, and galloped madly down the hill. Three or four of the guerillas had preceded him; but the captured horses of the Carlists, on which they were mounted, were sorry beasts, and he soon left them far in his rear. He saw Baltasar galloping at full speed up the valley, the double burthen apparently unfelt by the vigorous animal he bestrode. But Herrera, also, was well mounted, his horse fresh, and he gained on the fugitive, gradually, it is true, but still he gained on him.

Selecting the most favourable ground, and avoiding plantations, or whatever else might impede his progress, Baltasar spurred onwards, stimulating his steed with his voice, and occasionally striking his flanks with his sabre-flat. When dashing through the court, his companion, or, it should rather be said, his captive, had been seen to struggle, although the thick black veil in which her head was muffled, prevented her cries, if any she uttered, from being audible. She now lay, as if insensible, on the left arm of the Carlist colonel. Behind came Herrera, bareheaded, with clenched teeth, his drawn sword in his hand, in readiness to strike the very instant he should come within reach of the ravisher. Unfortunately the distance between them diminished but slowly, and Herrera trembled lest superior bone and endurance on the part of his enemy's charger should yet enable him to escape; when to his inexpressible relief he saw the horse stop, with a suddenness that almost threw his rider on his neck, and then, on being furiously spurred and urged forward, rear, turn round, and oppose all the resistance of a horse brought to a leap which he is afraid or unable to take. Whilst galloping down a rough and stony path, on one of whose sides was a high bank, and on the other an abrupt fall in the ground, Baltasar had come upon a deep trench or rivulet of considerable width, and this his horse obstinately refused to cross. Casting a hasty glance back at his pursuer, still far behind, Baltasar turned his charger, and again rode him at the obstacle. Again the animal shied, and refused. His rider uttered a furious oath, and resolutely wheeled about, as if resolved to fight now that he could no longer fly. Herrera's heart beat quick with hope. At length, then, he should rescue and revenge his Rita. He was within twenty yards of the Carlist, when the latter drew a pistol and fired at him. His horse received

the ball in his breast, staggered forward, carried on by the impetus he had acquired, and fell, with his rider partly under him. Before Herrera could extricate himself, the sound of hoofs was heard, and another horseman galloped down the lane. Again Baltasar rode at the ditch, but his steed, discouraged and cowed by violent treatment, made no effort to cross it. With a fierce execration, he threw the woman violently to the ground, and driving the point of his sword an inch or more into his horse's crupper, the animal, relieved of part of his load, and maddened by the cruel and unusual stimulus, cleared the ditch. As he did so, Herrera regained his feet and hurried to the unfortunate creature of whom Baltasar had so brutally disencumbered himself. She lay upon her side, motionless, and the veil that wrapped her head was wet with blood.

"Rita!" exclaimed Luis; "Rita!"

Raising her on his arm, he drew the covering from her face. The features disclosed were entirely unknown to him. Just then Velasquez came up at speed, and, flying across the ditch, continued the pursuit.

The person whom Herrera supported in his arms was of middle age, and had the remains of great beauty, although her countenance was emaciated, and pale as the white nun's robe in which she was clad. In falling she had received severe injury; her temple had struck against a sharp angle of the granite path, and blood flowed in abundance from a deep wound. Her eyes were closed, and her features wore a suffering expression. Amidst the various and opposite emotions that agitated Herrera on finding himself again disappointed, the predominant impulse was to return immediately to the convent, there to seek his mistress. Nevertheless common humanity forbade his abandoning the nun, at least till her senses returned, or till he could leave her in proper care, and moreover he hoped to obtain from her

some information concerning Rita. Carrying her to the bank of the little stream, he laid her gently upon the grass, and fetching water in the hollow of his hands, sprinkled it upon her face. She revived a little, opened her eyes, and by a convulsive movement assumed a sitting posture, but instantly fell back again. Glancing at Herrera's uniform in seeming surprise, she gazed around her with a haggard and terrified look.

"Have no fear," said Herrera; "you are safe. Do I mistake, or are you Doña Carmen de Forcadell?"

The nun's lips moved, but no sound escaped them.

"And Rita?" said Herrera, unable to restrain the inquiry, "where is she?"

"Rita!" repeated the nun in a hollow broken voice, "What of her? Where am I? how came I here? Oh, oh!" she exclaimed in tones of anguish, "I remember!"

She put her hand to her head with a suffering gesture; a strange wild gleam shone in her eyes, as if reason were leaving her. Herrera anxiously watched her. Her features became more composed, and for a moment she appeared to suffer less.

"And Rita?" he again asked.

She looked him full in the face, the fire of delirium in her eyes. "Rita!" she repeated. She paused, and then burst out into a scream of laughter that made Herrera shudder.

"Ha, ha!" she cried. "False! vile! faithless!"

The laugh died away upon her convulsed lips, a deep sob burst from her breast, her head fell back. She was a corpse.

Herrera had but just assured himself that life was indeed extinct, when he heard in two different directions the sound of horses' feet, and then Torres galloped up, followed by several guerillas.

"What do you here? The Mochuelo is furious at the

delay. You will be left behind. Where is Rita? Who is this?" cried he, looking at the dead body of the nun.

Before Herrera could reply, Velasquez cleared the ditch. His face was covered with blood, his sabre, which dangled from his wrist, showed the same sanguine signals, and he led Baltasar's horse by the rein.

"Mount!" cried he to Herrera, "and spur, all of you, like devils. We have been here too long already."

"You overtook him?" cried Herrera, springing into the saddle.

For sole reply, Velasquez raised his crimson sword, and dashing away with the back of his hand the blood that blinded him, and which flowed from a cut on his head, he set forward at full speed towards the convent.

The guerillas were already formed up in readiness to depart. The Mochuelo, chafing with impatience, rode to meet Herrera and Velasquez.

"By all the saints!" he exclaimed, "this delay may cost us our lives, Captain Herrera. But how is this—you come alone? He has escaped, then, and carried off the lady!"

"It was not her we seek," replied Luis; "she must still be in the convent."

"Impossible!" said the Mochuelo. "We have rummaged every corner."

"She *must* be there!" cried Herrera. "I will find her."

"We march instantly," said the Mochuelo, laying his hand on Luis's bridle. "We have tarried too long."

"Go, then, without me!" exclaimed Herrera. And, snatching his rein from the guerilla's grasp, he spurred his horse up the slope.

"Go with him, Señor Torres," said the Mochuelo. "Every moment is a man's life. Three minutes more and I march."

Torres rode after his friend.

"And Baltasar?" said the Mochuelo to his lieutenant.

"Lies yonder in the valley," was the reply of Velasquez, as he wiped his sword on his horse's mane and returned it to the scabbard. "Wolves' meat, if they will have him."

The convent, when Herrera and Torres re-entered it, showed abundant traces of its recent rough occupants. Doors broken down, windows smashed, the corridors and cloisters encumbered with broken furniture, and illuminated here and there by the thick wax tapers used at the altar, some of which had fallen from the places where the guerillas had stuck them, and now flamed upon the ground, threatening the building with conflagration. Some of the nuns had shut themselves in their cells, others sat weeping and moping in the refectory; on all sides were desolation and the sound of lamentation. Here and there lay the bloody and disfigured bodies of the slain Carlists. Not one of them had been spared. The chapel had been ransacked, and although the Mochuelo had forbidden his men to encumber themselves with plunder, all the smaller and more valuable decorations of the sacred edifice had been transferred to the havresacks of the guerillas. He had been more successful in preserving the nuns from ill usage, although, in moments of license and excitement, even his commands did not always find obedience. But a few minutes, however, had been granted to the reckless invaders to complete their work of spoliation, before he cleared the convent, and, forming up his men outside the gate, forbade their leaving their ranks. On Herrera's entrance the terrified nuns thought the guerillas were returning, and with cries of terror fled in all directions. He succeeded in calming their fears, and inquired for the abbess, although nearly certain that she it was whose death he had witnessed. None could tell him aught concerning

her ; nor was he able, either by threats or entreaties, to obtain any information about Rita. Several of the nuns knew that she and her attendant had occupied apartments contiguous to those of the abbess ; but they had none of them been admitted to see her, and knew nothing of her fate. A rapid search instituted by Herrera and Torres was entirely fruitless. Already the Mochuelo had sent two messengers to hasten their movements, and at last Torres succeeded in dragging his friend away. The guerillas had marched, with the exception of a small party who still waited at the foot of the slope and now hurried after the main body.

Whilst traversing in silence and darkness the mountain in rear of the convent, Herrera was at length able to collect his bewildered thoughts, and with comparative calmness to pass in review the events of the evening, and the unsatisfactory results of his ill-fated expedition. Long used to disappointment, and aware of the difficulties environing his project, he had approached the convent in no sanguine mood ; but still he had hopes, now wrecked, and never, he feared, to be realised. What had become of Rita, and how could he obtain tidings of her ? Had she already been removed from the convent ? But why, then, had Baltasar returned thither ? His death, at least, was some consolation. Wherever Rita might be, she no longer had his persecution to dread. Against Herrera's will, and although he spurned the thought, and blamed himself for entertaining it, even for a moment, the ominous words, the last the abbess had spoken, rang in his ears, like the judge's sentence in those of a condemned criminal. False, vile, faithless ! Could it be ? Could Rita, by importunity, intimidation, or from any other motive, have been induced to listen otherwise than with abhorrence to Baltasar's odious addresses ? Herrera could not, would not, believe it ; and yet how was

he to interpret the words of the abbess? Were they the mere ravings of delirium, or had they signification? If Rita was false, then indeed was there no truth upon earth. Confused, bewildered, tortured by the ideas that crowded upon his heated brain, Herrera sat like an automaton in his saddle, unmindful of where he was, and utterly forgetting the dangers that surrounded him. He was roused by the Mochuelo from his state of abstraction.

"We shall not reach Pampeluna without a skirmish," said the partisan, in a low but cheerful and confident tone. "I am much mistaken, or the enemy have got the alarm, and are on the look-out for us."

The prospect of action was perhaps the only thing that could then have diverted Herrera's thoughts from the painful subject pre-occupying them. In his galled and irritated mood, driven to doubt of what he never before had doubted, the idea of something to grapple with, of resistance to overcome, an enemy to strive against, was a positive relief, and he answered the Mochuelo quickly and fiercely.

"The better!" said he. "Our expedition will not have been entirely fruitless. Mochuelo, your men are brave and true. Night favours us. Let the rebels come. We will give them a lesson they shall long remember."

"Nevertheless," replied the guerilla, "I would rather avoid them, for they are twenty to one. One fight will not settle the matter, even though we be victors. But they are gathering. Listen!"

Herrera listened, and from various quarters sounds that warned of approaching danger reached his ears. On one hand, although at a considerable distance, the clang of a cavalry trumpet was audible; on the other, church and convent bells rang out a tocsin of alarm. The sounds were taken up by other bells—in their rear, in front, on all

sides. The Mochuelo rode along the flank of the little column, which in dead silence, and with rapid steps, followed El Tuerto, who marched at its head, with Paco and Velasquez. So dim and shadowy did the dark figures of the guerillas appear, as they noiselessly strode along, that they might have been taken for the spectres of the slain, risen from some bloody battle-field, and condemned to wander over the scene of their former exploits. With words of praise and encouragement the Mochuelo stimulated their progress.

“Forward, men!” he said: “steady and silent! Every minute is worth a million. There will be work for you before morning, but it is yet too soon.”

Full of confidence in their leader, undeterred by danger, but knowing the necessity of speed and prudence in their perilous position, the guerillas pressed on, keeping well together, and at a pace which it seemed impossible they should long sustain. They did sustain it, however; and, thanks to their doing so, to the darkness, and to the skilful guidance of El Tuerto, to whom each tree and rock of that wild district was familiar, the Mochuelo's predictions were but partially realised. More than once, indeed, the adventurous little band were within a hair's-breadth of stumbling upon patrols and pickets of the enemy; more than once, whilst they lay upon their faces in the long fern, or stood concealed amongst trees, parties of cavalry rode by within pistol-shot; but, nevertheless all encounters were happily avoided, and it was not till the first gray light of morning, and within a short league of Pampeluna, that they fell in with a Carlist battalion, occupied in posting the advanced pickets. Skirmishing ensued, and the Carlists, superior in number, pressed their opponents vigorously, until Herrera and the Mochuelo placed themselves at the head of

the guerillas and charged with the bayonet. The Carlists gave way and were pursued for a short distance, when the Mochuelo, not deeming it prudent to follow them further, ordered the recall to be sounded. Half an hour afterwards he and his men were in safety under the cannon of Pampeluna.

The morning sun shone brightly when Herrera entered the town. At that early hour the streets had few occupants besides the market people, who walked briskly along, balancing their vegetable stores upon their heads, and chattering noisily in the Basque tongue; at a stable-door some Andalusian dragoons groomed their horses, gaily singing in chorus one of the lively seguidillas of their native province; here and there a 'prentice boy, yawning and sleepy-eyed, removed the shutters from his master's shop. The dew lay in glistening beads upon the house-tops; there was a crispness in the air, a cheerful freshness in the appearance of all things, that was in jarring discord with Herrera's gloomy and desponding mood, as, with fevered pulse and haggard looks, he guided his wearied horse towards Count Villabuena's quarters. He came in sight of the house: its upper windows had just caught the first sunbeams; the balconies were filled with plants, whose bright blossoms and fresh leaves contrasted pleasantly with the ancient stone-work of the heavy façade; on a myrtle spray, a bird, capriciously deserting the greenwood for the city, trimmed his feathers and carolled a lively note; all about the dwelling seemed so gay and gladsome, that Herrera involuntarily checked his horse, and felt inclined to turn back. For the second time a messenger of evil, how could he break his sad intelligence to the Count—by what arguments console the heart-broken old man under this new and bitter disappointment? As he passed the angle of the

house, he saw that the *jalousies* of Count Villabuena's windows were open; doubtless he was already up, looking anxiously for the arrival of his daughter; perhaps, alarmed at the prolonged absence of Herrera, he had not been to rest. Luis dreaded the effect of his painful tidings upon the Count's feeble health, and he racked his imagination to devise a way of gradually imparting them: but it was in vain; for his appearance, unaccompanied by Rita, would be sufficient to make her father conjecture even worse than the truth.

The family of Basilio, the cloth-merchant, were early in their habits, and the house was already open. With heavy and reluctant step, Luis ascended the stairs, and then paused, irresolute and unwilling to enter the Count's apartment. At last, summoning courage, he was about to lift the latch, when it was raised, and Count Villabuena, completely dressed, and pale as from a sleepless night, stood before him. He started on beholding Herrera, and his countenance was illumined with joy.

"Thanks be to God!" he exclaimed, clasping his hands with a gesture of profound piety and gratitude,—“thanks be to God, you are safe!”

"Alas!" cried Herrera, "my safety matters little. We have been unsuccessful; Rita ——"

He became suddenly mute, for at that moment the door of an inner room opened; a voice, long unheard but well remembered, uttered his name; and Rita, more lovely than ever, tears upon her cheeks and joy in her eyes, threw herself into his arms.

We will leave to our reader's imagination the transports of two lovers, who after so long a separation, and sufferings of so many kinds, found themselves thus happily,

and, as far as one of them at least was concerned, unexpectedly reunited, and will confine ourselves to an explanation of the circumstances that led to so fortunate a result. It may be given in few words.

Although Baltasar's ascendancy over Doña Carmen, partly the consequence of former complicity in crime, partly attributable to her dread of his brutal and violent character, had induced her to accept the custody of Rita, it was most unwillingly that she had done so, and with the full determination to protect, to the utmost of her power, the defenceless girl of whom she was compelled to be the jailer. Rita's beauty and amiable qualities, and the angelic sweetness and patience displayed by her during the severe illness that followed her arrival at the convent, endeared her to the abbess, who became confirmed in her resolve to guard her interesting prisoner from harm. More than once, moved by Rita's tears and entreaties, she was tempted to set her at liberty, but was deterred by fear of Baltasar. The action of Mendi-gorria was fought—news came to the convent that Colonel Villabuena had been killed. The abbess hesitated no longer, but at once released Rita, who, accompanied by her waiting-maid, was escorted by a couple of sturdy and trustworthy peasants to the nearest town. Thence she safely reached the French frontier, which was at no great distance. Once in France, she learned, to her unspeakable joy, from Spanish emigrants there resident, that her father still lived, although a prisoner, and that he was then at Logroño. At all risks she resolved to rejoin him. Proceeding to a point of the frontier held by the Christinos, she re-entered Spain, and arrived at Pampeluna twelve hours after Herrera had left it with the purpose of rescuing her. She had friends in the town whom she hastened to visit, and

by them she was conducted to her astonished and delighted father.

When Baltasar reached the convent, and found Rita no longer there, his fury was unbounded, and he loaded the abbess with reproaches and abuse. He became yet more violent when she refused to tell him the direction in which Rita had gone. Owing to the disturbed state of the country, and the recent movements of the Christino army, Doña Carmen could not be certain that her late prisoner had succeeded in leaving Spain, and she therefore resolutely refused to give Baltasar any information concerning her. It was then that occurred the scene of which Paco had overheard a part, when Baltasar struck and ill-treated the unfortunate nun, who with heroic courage remained firm in her refusal, submitting meekly to his cruelty, and trusting that her sufferings might be accepted as a partial expiation of her former offences, long repented if yet unatoned. Still, however, Baltasar did not despair of compelling her to reveal what he so ardently desired to know; and it was doubtless for that reason that he carried her with him when he fled from the convent. It has already been seen how care for his own preservation induced him to abandon her, although too late to save himself. Within a few hundred yards of the place where he had so brutally thrown her from his horse, he was overtaken by Velasquez, at whose hand, after a brief but desperate conflict, he met a more honourable death than he deserved. Upon the following day, his body and that of his erring victim were brought to the convent by peasants of the neighbourhood, and both found sepulture in the chapel. The convent has since been abandoned and partly pulled down; but the chapel still stands, and on its paved floor may still be read inscriptions

recording the date and manner of the death of Baltasar de Villabuena and Carmen de Forcadell.

As if fortune, weary of persecuting Herrera, had on a sudden determined to favour as much as she had previously slighted him, the same day that dawned upon his return to Pampeluna brought despatches from Madrid, announcing his promotion, and granting a free pardon to Count Villabuena, on the sole condition of his remaining neutral in the struggle between Carlists and Christinos. It was Cordova, who, out of friendship for Herrera, and compassion for the sufferings and misfortunes of the Count, had exerted his influence, then almost unlimited, in favour of the latter. To the prescribed condition, Count Villabuena, already disgusted by the ingratitude of him whom he called his king, and despairing, since the death of Zumalacarregui, of the success of the Carlist cause, was, without much difficulty, induced to adhere.

Less successful were the Count and Rita in prevailing upon Herrera to leave the service, and, contenting himself with the laurels he had already won, to retire into private life. Gladly, perhaps, would he have done so, had he consulted only his inclinations; but he had not forgotten his pledge to his dying father, never to sheath his sword till the right cause had triumphed. In common with many of his party, he believed that triumph to be near at hand. Their recent successes, and the death of the only man amongst the Pretender's partisans who had shown high military talents, made the Christinos confident of the speedy termination of a war which was yet to be prolonged for four years. And when Herrera, in compliance with the Count's wishes, urged as entreaties rather than commands, agreed to wait its conclusion before claiming the hand of his daughter, he little dreamed at how many hard-fought

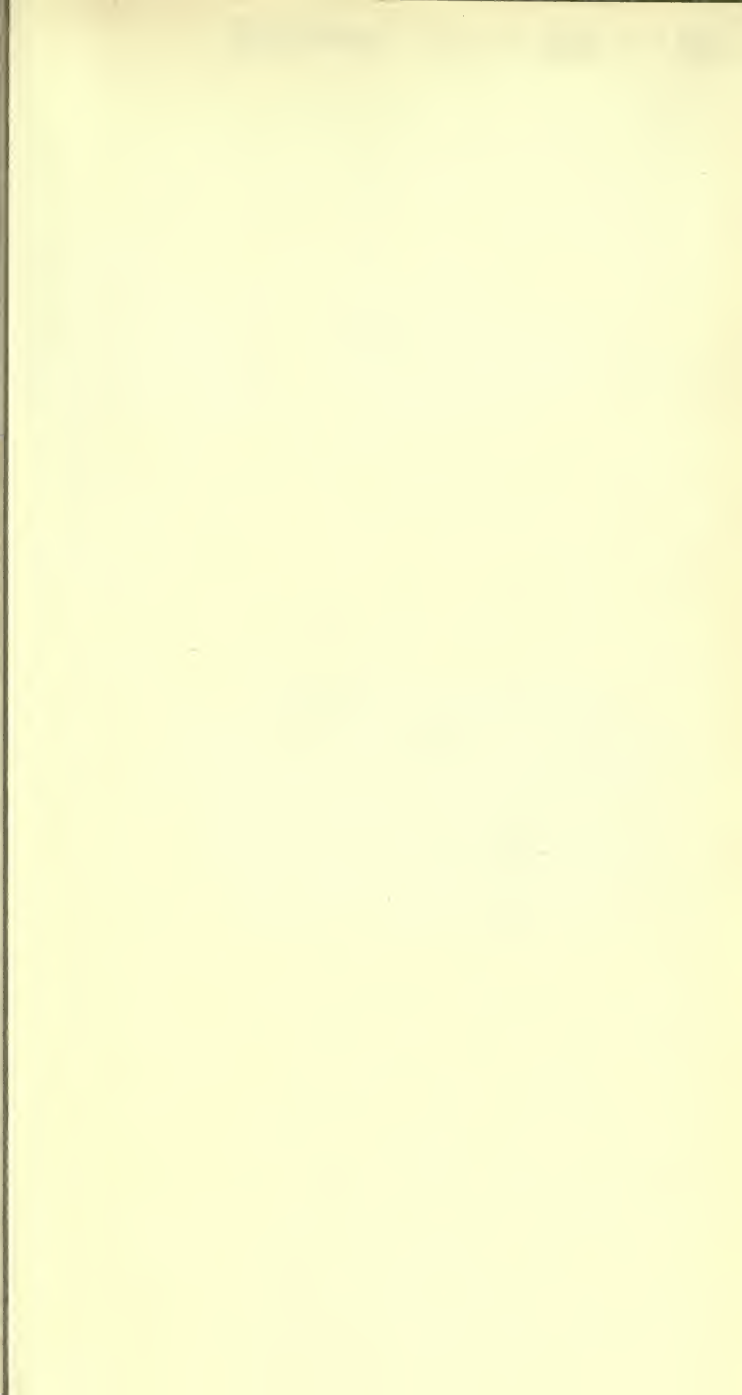
fields he should be present, how many tearful partings and joyful meetings would occur, before peace should be restored to Spain, and Rita could become his wife without risk of finding herself the morrow a widow. From summer to winter, from winter to spring, the marriage was deferred, until at length the Count was about to withdraw his opposition, when the-convention of Vergara took place, and removed the only objection to the union of Rita and Luis. By that convention the war was in fact concluded; for although Cabrera and other chiefs still waved the banner of rebellion in the mountains of Catalonia and Arragon, there could now be no doubt of their speedy subjugation. Deprived of the support of Biscay and Navarre, and especially of the moral weight given to it by the adherence of those provinces, the Carlist rebellion was virtually crushed.

On a bright autumnal afternoon of the year 1839, a travelling carriage, of form and dimensions by no means incommodious, although its antique construction, and the tawny tint of its yellow paint, might in London or Vienna have subjected it to criticism, drove rapidly past the roadside inn at which our story commenced. As it did so, a young man of military appearance looked out of the window of the vehicle, and his eyes met those of the coachman, who glanced at the inn with an air of peculiar interest. The two men smiled, although with a somewhat melancholy expression; the driver touched his cap, cracked his long whip, and the next instant the rapid gallop of the mules had taken the carriage out of sight of the venta. The driver was Paco the muleteer, the officer was General Herrera; and the sight of the inn, still shaded by the huge tree in its front, and flanked by the broken wall, had recalled to their recollection the famous game at ball played by Paco and Velasquez, and which subsequently cost the one a horse

and the other a broken head. A ball of another description had since proved fatal to the dragoon. He had fallen in one of the last actions of the war, fighting gallantly by the side of the Mochuelo, whose fortunes he had continued to share.

Accompanied by his bride and father-in-law, Herrera was on his way to the villa near Tudela, now again the property of Count Villabuena. Desirous to conciliate a nobleman of ancient name and high character, and out of consideration for the great services which Herrera's zeal and talents had rendered the cause, the Queen's government had some time previously restored to the Count his confiscated estates. At length the clouds that had darkened the career of Luis Herrera were entirely dissipated, and the long perspective of happiness before him appeared the brighter, when contrasted with the misfortunes and sufferings that had embittered the early manhood of the Student of Salamanca.

THE END.





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The student of Salamanc

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